

TOWARDS “POLITICAL PLURALISM” – APPRECIATIVE INQUIRY, INTERFAITH  
RELATIONS AND DIVERSITY IN OUR SCHOOLS, WORK, AND SOCIAL LIVES

A Dissertation  
presented to  
the Faculty of  
Claremont School of Theology

In Partial Fulfillment  
of the Requirements for the Degree  
Doctor of Philosophy

by  
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May 2019







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faculty of Claremont School of Theology in  
partial fulfillment of the requirements of the

**DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY**

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May 2019



## ABSTRACT

### TOWARDS “POLITICAL PLURALISM” – APPRECIATIVE INQUIRY, INTERFAITH RELATIONS AND DIVERSITY IN OUR SCHOOLS, WORK, AND SOCIAL LIVES

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This dissertation considers dominant forms of political and social discourse in the United States. As an interpretive lens, it adapts classic concepts from the Christian Theology of Religions – Exclusivism, Inclusivism and Pluralism. Political Exclusivism, an ideological viewpoint that is defined by absolute rejection of the Political Other, is by far the most common ideology. This has several negative consequences for the American public, including isolation, stereotyping, mistrust, and in the worst cases violence. Political Inclusivism, while much milder in attitude, still perceives the Other through the viewpoint of one’s own system of belief. This allows for greater association, but the inability to perceive the Other as truly different limits the ability to create deep understanding. Political Pluralism is the only category that takes the viewpoint of the Other as fully valid. This allows for the greatest possibility of legitimate appreciation and friendship.

The second half of this paper explores how one might proceed to develop Political Pluralism. To do so, I consider the results of two surveys that were administered in 2017 and 2018 respectively. Both were large surveys (2017, n=850; 2018, n=150) that concerned participants viewpoints towards diversity. They were administered online through Amazon



Mechanical Turk, and resulted in a joint 285 pages and 70,544 words of transcript. The second of these surveys was developed using the format of Appreciative Inquiry, a strengths-based methodology that elicits positive affect from participants and allows for what I call “Utopic Thinking,” a term taken from Karl Mannheim’s Sociology of Knowledge.

Ultimately I argue that, contrary to the narrative of popular media, Political Pluralism does exist in our society, and there is a yearning for more of it in our public dialogue. I identify several social locations where Pluralist conversation and learning is likely to occur (most notably work, educational settings, and through community service activities), and argue that careful attention should be given to how to expand these Pluralist narratives in the public sphere. My examples here draw from the field of Interreligious Studies, and are confirmed by my own empirical research.



## CONTENTS

Abstract .....	iii
Table of Contents .....	vi
List of Illustrations .....	vii
Dedication .....	viii
Acknowledgments.....	ix
Introduction.....	1
1. A Primer on Exclusivism.....	19
2. Exclusivism and Politics .....	34
3. Inclusivism and Pluralism in Theory and Practice .....	64
4. Research Methodology: Mechanical Turk and Appreciative Inquiry.....	88
5. Description and Interpretation of Findings .....	112
6. Moving Forward: Towards Political Pluralism.....	136
Bibliography .....	160
Appendices.....	171
Appendix A: Survey #1 (2017) Consent Form .....	171
Appendix B: Survey #1 (2017) Questionnaire.....	173
Appendix C: Survey #1 (2017) Statistical Results Tables.....	182
Appendix D: Survey #2 (2018) Consent Form .....	185
Appendix E: Survey #2 (2018) Questionnaire.....	188
Appendix F: Survey #2 (2018) Statistical Results Tables .....	192



## List of Illustrations

Figure 1: Trump Billboard – “Word Made Flesh” .....	36
Figure 2: United State Congress - Rotunda .....	38
Figure 3: United States Congress – Apotheosis of Washington .....	39
Figure 4: Facebook, “As for me.....” Meme.....	41
Figure 5: Facebook, “As for me...” Comments.....	43
Figure 6: Facebook, “Obama” Competing Memes .....	45
Figure 7: Facebook, “Democrats as Threat” Meme.....	54
Figure 8: Facebook, “Jesus Forgives Liberals?” Meme .....	56
Figure 9: Facebook, “Trump is an Asshole” Meme .....	57
Figure 10: Research Graph, Partisan Stereotypes.....	59
Figure 11: Research Graph, Respondent Ideology 2017 .....	122
Figure 12: Research Graph, Respondent Ideology 2018 .....	129
Figure 13: Research Graph, Sites of Diversity .....	139
Figure 14: Research Graph, Male and Female Responses 2017.....	148
Figure 15: Research Graph, Male and Female Responses 2018.....	149



## **Dedication**

“Now wait a minute, Mr. Socks Fox!” – The Knox

~ Dr. Seuss, *Fox in Socks* ~



## **Acknowledgments**

To begin, I would like to thank my family for their love, dedication, and incredible patience with me through the Ph.D. process. Erin, thank you for our many thoughtful conversations about the material that will follow here, and for your willingness to serve as my editor even in the face of absurdly dense and complicated Ph.D. lingo. Winry, thank you for all the times you provided a pleasant distraction, just when I needed it most. Gene and Alma (Dad and Mom) thank you for supporting me through this Ph.D. process, my Masters degree, and my undergraduate work as well. I deeply appreciate you always being there across the miles.

Second, I want to thank my committee, Najeeba, Dionne, and Philip, for their advice and guidance through this dissertation process. Your input has helped create a much stronger product, and I am deeply grateful for our conversations and your thoughtful suggestions. I would also like to give a shoutout to all of my professors at Claremont School of Theology and Claremont Graduate University for your parts in shaping my mind and my academic persona. Of special note here is Helene, thank you for being my advisor and friend for the first five years of the program.

Third, thanks to the many mentors, both academic and otherwise, who have had an influence on my thought and my values, particularly “The Larrys,” Larry Haynes and Larry Alderink. You both have shaped me more than you will ever know.

Fourth, and finally, I would like to thank all of my fellow scholars for our many long conversations and deep comradery - Dane, Tracy, Yi Shen, Michelle, Nikia and all of my other fellow Clarмонтians.



# Introduction

In many ways this dissertation is about the visions of the nation we want to create together. Is it one shaped by diversity and pluralism of values? Or is it one that has a single central and unifying vision of the good? This is a foundational problem in American life, and goes back to our earliest civil conversations. Even our Great Seal, *E pluribus unum*, “one from many” reflects this unique tension of American identity. In 1776, the phrase referred to the different colonies, now states, becoming one nation.<sup>1</sup> But this phrase is also apt to describe the myriad ways the American body politic understands diversity today. Communities throughout the United States work locally, regionally, and nationally to make sense of “the many” and to find ways of working together toward some vision of the American ideal.

And yet, our nation is so often referred to as “a nation divided.” One rarely goes a day without hearing conversations of “culture wars.” Martin Marty refers to this conflict as our “national trauma....an ongoing conflict over how the one and the many relate to one another in American life.”<sup>2</sup> This dissertation considers the ways in which Americans socially construct these ideals, the paths that these ideologies take, and the effects these constructions have on our relationships with fellow Americans. As a framework for these constructions I am adapting concepts from the fields of Theology of Religions and Interreligious Studies, two academic areas from within the field of Religion that specifically ponder issues of difference.

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<sup>1</sup> For more on the history of the U.S. Great Seal, see Richard Patterson, *The Eagle and the Shield: A History of the Great Seal of the United States* (Washington: Office of the Historian, Bureau of Public Affairs, Department of State, 1976).

<sup>2</sup> Martin Marty, *The One and the Many, America's Struggle for the Common Good* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1997), 4.



The first of these, Political Exclusivism, posits that a narrowly defined ideology is the only possible course through which our nation can achieve greatness. Other political or social ideals are highly suspect, and Political Exclusivists react to difference as a threat that is to be quarantined, limited, converted, or destroyed. This instinct, I argue, leads to many different negative consequences including isolationism, negative stereotyping of others, and a sense of paranoia and threat that often results in hatred, aggression or even violence. Unfortunately, this style of political thinking is both common and often encouraged by our political and social elites.

My first two chapters are dedicated to developing the concept of Political Exclusivism, and demonstrating its presence in the American landscape. Chapter 1 will trace its origins within Theology of Religions, particularly in the work of scholar Alan Race.<sup>3</sup> I show the central tenants of Exclusivist belief and develop several “core characteristics” that carry over into political/ideological discussions. Chapter 2 turns towards the American political system, and demonstrates how Exclusivism can be thought of as a political ‘type.’ In this analysis I develop a history of American exclusivist thinking, particularly through (hyper)partisanship, and show how it distorts the viewpoints of the American public. For this analysis I draw upon recent research on political sorting, most notably work done by Lilliana Mason and Robert Putnam, as well classic theorists such as Hannah Arendt.<sup>4</sup>

Contrasting with Exclusivism are the competing philosophies of Political Inclusivism and Pluralism. These I address in Chapter 3. Inclusivism, as mode of thinking, still holds to the

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<sup>3</sup> For information on Race’s theories see: Alan Race, *Christians and Religious Pluralism: Patterns in the Christian Theology of Religions* (Maryknoll: Orbis Books, 1982).

<sup>4</sup> Lilliana Mason, *Uncivil Agreement: How Politics Became Our Identity* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2018); Robert Putnam, *Bowling Alone: The Collapse and Revival of American Community* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 2000); Hannah Arendt, *The Origins of Totalitarianism* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Harcourt, 1973).



particularity of one meta-narrative. This ideology is different, however, in its conception of the Other. I further break down Inclusivism into weaker and stronger forms. In the ‘weaker’ formation of Inclusivism, a community acknowledges positive values of the other where these align with their own philosophy, but in the end analysis still also believes that the alternate community has a degree of threat. In the ‘stronger’ form, the Other become innocuous. They pose no harm and indeed work towards the same general ends as the home community. However, the Other is still largely unaware of the true reason that their behavior is beneficial, and frequently “does the right thing for the wrong reasons.” Thus, this ideology accepts diversity, but only insofar as it is seen as accepting the ends of their own home community. The Other is here still perceived through the ‘eyes’ of one’s own culture/tradition.

The third of my categories, Political Pluralism, legitimately prizes difference. Here the Other is treated as an Other, and efforts are made to understand them on their own grounds, without judging them against one’s own values. This form of thinking, I argue, offers the best possibility for the formation of deep community. Inclusivism, while showing considerably more openness towards the Other than Exclusivism, is still limited by its inability to truly ‘visit’ the other and understand them from their own vantage point.

Chapter 3 also discusses methods used in Interreligious Studies to create community and common ground. Religious conflicts are some of the oldest and deepest types of human struggle, and the strategies developed by faith-based peacemakers are well suited to discussing political



difference as well. Notable influences here include Martin E. Marty, David Smock, and Eboo Patel.<sup>5</sup>

As my analysis in these chapters will show, there are numerous reasons to encourage Political Pluralism in the broader public. The second half of my dissertation explores how that might be possible through qualitative studies. The method I use for this analysis is an approach known as Appreciate Inquiry. Appreciative Inquiry works from an inductive, “Grounded Theory” approach to empirical research. Chapter 4 goes over my research methodology, including the two surveys I completed in 2017 and 2018 respectively. It addresses these both from a traditional positivistic “empirical” standpoint as well as from the angle of new theory development, which I treat as the primary aim of this project. In Chapter 5 I highlight the major themes and coding schema that developed from the surveys, and summarize the empirical data gathered during the exercise. Finally, Chapter 6 discusses current sites of “Political Pluralism” in the public sphere, and offers suggestions about how these sites can be expanded. Here I also discuss how Exclusivism/Inclusivism/Pluralism intersect with gender and race dynamics, and demonstrate how such dynamics provide both opportunities and warnings for the Pluralist project.

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<sup>5</sup> Martin Marty, *When Faiths Collide* (Hoboken: Wiley-Blackwell, 2013); David Smock, *Interfaith Dialogue and Peacemaking* (Washington: United States Institute of Peace, 2007); Eboo Patel, *Sacred Ground: Pluralism, Prejudice and the Promise* (Boston: Beacon Press, 2012);



## RELEVANT BACKGROUND LITERATURE

Since this dissertation makes use of a number of established fields across several academic disciplines, the remainder of this chapter will provide background information on these disciplines along with relevant theoretical elements that will be used in the following chapters. This includes the fields of Interreligious Studies and Theology of Religions within the discipline of Religion, as well as Political Sociology and the Sociology of Knowledge.

## INTERRELIGIOUS STUDIES

Much of this dissertation will be in conversation with Interreligious Studies, a comparatively new field within the study of religion.<sup>6</sup> Interreligious Studies is truly a multidisciplinary approach to studying religion, itself taking theory/methods from multiple sources. As such, I chose to address it first, as several of the bridging disciplines that I incorporate into my discussion have also been utilized by other authors publishing in this field.

Within the study of religion, Interreligious Studies traces its roots back through Comparative Religious Studies (and its progenitor *Religionswissenschaft*, the “science of religion”) as well as through the practice field of Interfaith Dialogue. Comparative Religious Studies had its beginning in the late 1800’s with figures such as Friedrich Max Müller (1823-1900) and Cornelis Petrus Tiele (1830-1902). These were some of the first Western scholars of

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<sup>6</sup> It should be noted that there is still an open dispute whether it should be named “Interreligious Studies” or “Interfaith Studies.” For example, a recent volume published in 2018 on the field by Eboo Patel et. al. lists both Interreligious/Interfaith studies in the title of the text. For this dissertation I have chosen to utilize “Interreligious Studies” as it is generally regarded as the more inclusive of the two terms. For more see: Eboo Patel, Jennifer Howe Peace and Noah Silverman, eds., *Interreligious/Interfaith Studies: Defining a New Field* (Boston: Beacon Press, 2018), xxi.



religion to aim for “neutral and scientific” approaches to the study of religion.<sup>7</sup> This form of theorizing was developing at the same time as many other ‘modern’ disciplines of study, (Sociology, Political Science, Economics etc.) and Müller and colleagues were instrumental in creating “secular” methods of analysis that operate outside the confines of ecclesiastical control.<sup>8</sup>

This focus on objective analysis is an integral aspect of Interreligious Studies. Deanna Ferree Womack argues that within Interreligious Studies, “our intention is not to make a personal value judgments on the truth of another tradition from the standpoint of our own. Instead we aim to understand other traditions as they present themselves, holding our own biases in check.”<sup>9</sup> Practitioners also commonly utilize “comparative methods” that were first developed in Comparative Religious Studies to make connections across traditions.<sup>10</sup>

However, it is also important to note that unlike in Comparative Religious Studies, scholars are not expected to bracket their own personal beliefs or traditions. It is a standard practice to recognize one’s beliefs, experiences and theologies, and to ‘own’ that social position as part of one’s scholarship. Womack describes this as a “third way” that bridges the divide between traditional Comparative Religion and the field of Theology.<sup>11</sup>

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<sup>7</sup> It should be noted that Müller and other classical *Religionswissenschaft* theorists are largely panned today for their Orientalist view of world religions. However, the influence of their broader project remains. Today Müller is frequently referred to as “The Father of Religious Studies.” For more on Müller see, Jon Stone, *The Essential Max Müller: On Language, Mythology, and Religion* (New York: Palgrave, 2002).

<sup>8</sup> For a detailed critical history of this discipline see, Tomoko Masuzawa, *The Invention of World Religions: Or, How European Universalism Was Preserved in the Language of Pluralism* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2005).

<sup>9</sup> Deanna Ferree Womack, “From the History of Religions to Interfaith Studies,” in *Interreligious/Interfaith Studies: Defining a New Field*, eds. Eboo Patel, Jennifer Howe Peace and Noah Silverman (Boston: Beacon Press, 2018), 15.

<sup>10</sup> Kate McCarthy, “(Inter)Religious Studies: Making a Home in the Secular Academy,” in *Interreligious/Interfaith Studies: Defining a New Field*, eds. Eboo Patel, Jennifer Howe Peace and Noah Silverman (Boston: Beacon Press, 2018), 6.

<sup>11</sup> Womack, “From the History of Religions to Interfaith Studies,” 14.



This acknowledgement of one's own viewpoints draws from the second major influence for Interreligious Studies – that of Interfaith Dialogue. Modern Interfaith Dialogue practices developed at a similar time period as Comparative Religious Studies. Many scholars cite the 1893 World's Parliament of Religions (which Max Müller himself spoke at) as a starting point for the development of this area of practice.<sup>12</sup> It expanded rapidly in the post-world War II era of the 1950's-1960's as theological schools began turning their attention beyond the study of world religions to the establishment of curricular programs that encouraged channels of communication between traditions. Thus, Interfaith Dialogue developed as a formal field primarily concerned with the practice of interreligious conversation.<sup>13</sup> As Womack notes, "The influence of Interfaith Dialogue pushes Interreligious Studies out of purely academic inquiry into questions of lived praxis."<sup>14</sup>

Interreligious Studies takes from Interfaith Dialogue both its focus on developing relationships across difference as well as a desire for practical application of research. Not surprisingly then, many contributors to Interreligious Studies also have lived experience working in religious non-governmental organizations, U.S. non-profits or other civil agencies. This experience is frequently utilized in their discussions, and their agencies often become the sites of 'case studies' that further research in the field. Eboo Patel, one of the most influential founders of Interreligious Studies as a formal field, frequently takes examples from his experiences

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<sup>12</sup> Womack, "From the History of Religions to Interfaith Studies," 16; Masuzawa, *The Invention of World Religions: Or, How European Universalism Was Preserved in the Language of Pluralism*, 265.

<sup>13</sup> Interestingly, Interfaith Dialogue became a 'formal' field at the American Academy of Religion in the late 1980's, but has since been removed as a unit. Exploration of how/why this developed is beyond the scope of this current work. However, its disappearance raises interesting questions concerning the relationship between 'practice' based fields such as Interfaith Dialogue and more traditional theoretical fields within the AAR. For more, see Womack, "From the History of Religions to Interfaith Studies," 23; Masuzawa, *The Invention of World Religions: Or, How European Universalism Was Preserved in the Language of Pluralism*, 1-13.

<sup>14</sup> Womack, "From the History of Religions to Interfaith Studies," 16-17.



directing the Interfaith Youth Core in his writings.<sup>15</sup> In this text I have followed a similar pattern, drawing upon my own experiences as the head of Family Promise of Orange County, an interfaith homeless shelter, where relevant to the discussion.<sup>16</sup>

Interreligious Studies also carries with it a normative commitment to social responsibility, again taken from the professional background of many contributors as well as its connection to Interfaith Dialogue, which is often utilized as a part of peacemaking efforts. Kate McCarthy argues that “Interreligious Studies ...focus[es] heavily on the theory and practice of effective interaction in professional and civic contexts with those who are religiously different.”<sup>17</sup> Similarly, Deanna Ferree Womack argues that the goal of Interreligious Studies is to “equip individuals with the knowledge base and skill set needed to engage religious diversity in a way that promotes peace, stability, and cooperation.”<sup>18</sup>

Finally, Interreligious Studies carries with it a tendency to draw upon multiple fields outside of the study of Religion. Eboo Patel, himself a Sociologist by training, explicitly suggests incorporating findings from the fields of Political Science and Sociology where relevant in his position paper “Toward a Field of Interfaith Studies.” This paper was highly influential in the American Academy of Religion creating an “Interfaith and Interreligious Studies” unit in 2013.<sup>19</sup>

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<sup>15</sup> For example, see Eboo Patel, *Interfaith Leadership, A Primer* (Boston: Beacon Press, 2016); Eboo Patel and Patrice Brodeur, *Building the Interfaith Youth Movement* (London: Rowman and Littlefield, 2006)

<sup>16</sup> See pages 80-82. I should also note that at points I draw from my own religious experiences, another common trait in Interreligious Studies writings.

<sup>17</sup> Kate McCarthy, “(Inter)Religious Studies: Making a Home in the Secular Academy,” 14.

<sup>18</sup> Womack, “From the History of Religions to Interfaith Studies,” 18.

<sup>19</sup> Eboo Patel, “Toward a Field of Interfaith Studies,” *Liberal Education* 99, No. 4 (Fall 2013), <https://web.archive.org/web/20190307232611/https://www.aacu.org/publications-research/periodicals/toward-field-interfaith-studies>. See also Patel, Peace, Silveraman, *Interreligious/Interfaith Studies: Defining a New Field*, xiv.



Both Patel and several of his multidisciplinary thought partners (such as Robert Putnam and Todd Pittinsky) are included in the later chapters of this paper.

## THEOLOGY OF RELIGIONS

The three-tiered Exclusivist/Inclusivist/Pluralist system used here had its origins in the field of “Theology of Religions,” particularly the work of theologian Alan Race in his *Christians and Religious Pluralism: Patterns in the Christian Theology of Religions*.<sup>20</sup> This highly influential text was quickly adopted by the theological community as a way of classifying how one religion may view/incorporate the competing beliefs of other traditions.”<sup>21</sup>

By far the most developed professional debates within Theology of Religions lie within Christian theological circles. Scholars trace its modern roots to a number of Christian theologians in the early-to-mid 20<sup>th</sup> Century. The Exclusivist position is most commonly connected with the theology of Karl Barth, who adhered very closely to the classic Protestant maxims “of being saved ...by grace alone, faith alone, Christ alone and Scripture alone.”<sup>22</sup> Among the other typological categories, thinkers such as John Hick and John Cobb were highly influential in Pluralist thought,<sup>23</sup> and many texts cite Catholic theologian Karl Rahner’s concept of

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<sup>20</sup> Alan Race, *Christians and Religious Pluralism: Patterns in the Christian Theology of Religions* (Maryknoll: Orbis Books, 1982).

<sup>21</sup> For a more detailed discussion of this discipline see: Paul Knitter, *Theologies of Religions* (Maryknoll: Orbis Books, 2002); Veli-Matti Kärkkäinen, *An Introduction to the Theology of Religions: Biblical, Historical and Contemporary Perspectives* (Downers Grove: Intervarsity Press, 2003); “Religious Diversity” Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy, accessed November, 22, 2017,

<https://web.archive.org/web/20181123055721/https://plato.stanford.edu/entries/religious-pluralism/>

<sup>22</sup> For what follows on Barth’s views of religions and Christianity, see the well-known “Paragraph 17” in Karl Barth, *Church Dogmatics* (Edinburgh: Clark, 1956). Also see a summary of his views in Knitter, *Theologies of Religions*, 32.

<sup>23</sup> See John Hick, *An Interpretation of Religion* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2004); John Cobb, *Beyond Dialogue: Toward a Mutual Transformation of Christianity and Buddhism* (Eugene: Wipf and Stock Publishers, 1982).



“Anonymous Christians” as the classic example of Inclusivism.<sup>24</sup> These theologians will be returned to in later chapters as we address each category of the typology in more detail.

Several scholars have also offered adaptations and improvements on the Race’s typology, for example Paul Knitter’s highly influential *Theologies of Religions*. In it he both breaks down the general categories further (for example, separating Exclusivism into “Partial and Complete Replacement models”) as well as adding to the system himself with new categories (i.e. his “Acceptance model.”).<sup>25</sup> Knitter’s work will be referenced frequently in this dissertation. However, I chose to use the classic “Race typology” as my primary categories both for conceptual simplicity and because Race’s typology is the baseline from which any current scholar working in Theology of Religions departs.

Today the typology is widely taught in theology and religion courses as a theory for understanding relationships between traditions. Theologians such as Veli-Matti Kärkkäinen have taken Alan Race’s typology and applied it to many Ancient Christian writers (Ignatius of Antioch, Cyprian of Carthage, Augustin as Exclusivist; Justin Martyr, Origin, and Clement of Alexandria as Inclusivist etc.).<sup>26</sup> There are also scholarly works that apply his typology to other religions. For example, Kristen Beise Kibinger explores Exclusivist/Inclusivist elements within the Buddhist tradition, and Jacques Waardenburg explores instances of Islamic thought that reflect all three categories.<sup>27</sup>

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<sup>24</sup> Karl Rahner is specifically virtually all Theology of Religions text books in reference to Inclusivism. For example, see references by Alan Race, Paul Knitter and Veli-Matti Kärkkäinen in their respective texts. For primary source reading on Rahner, I suggest: Karl Rahner, *A Rahner Reader* (New York: Crossroads, 1987).

<sup>25</sup> Knitter, *Theologies of Religions*, 38.

<sup>26</sup> See Kärkkäinen, *An Introduction to the Theology of Religions: Biblical, Historical and Contemporary Perspectives*, 147-210.

<sup>27</sup> Kristin Beise Kibinger, *Buddhist Inclusivism: Attitudes Towards Religious Others* (London: Routledge, 2005); Jacques Waardenburg, *Muslim Perceptions of Other Religions: A Historical Survey* (New York: Oxford University



However, it is very important to always remember the inspiration for this typology began with Christian theology, and that a vast majority of current work on the area remains Christian focused. As such it is highly theoretically tied to Christian discourse.<sup>28</sup> This dissertation reflects that relationship in that a vast majority of the theorists mentioned here will be of Christian origin. I will, at points, touch upon how Race's theological categories may be reflected in other traditions. Nevertheless, this is an area where considerable theoretical development needs to be made within the field.

## POLITICAL SOCIOLOGY

Turning towards the multidisciplinary aspects of my work, the theoretical construction of this paper owes a debt to Political Sociology, and particularly its theory of social capital. Political Sociology is itself a young discipline. Like other forms of Sociology it traces its origins to the writings of Alexis de Tocqueville, Karl Marx, Émile Durkheim, and Max Weber, among others, but it only emerged as a separate subfield within Sociology following World War II. As a discipline, Political Sociology centers on "the impact of class, religion, race/ethnicity, or education on individual and group-based political behavior."<sup>29</sup> It is often treated as *both* a field of Sociology as well as that of Political Science. As Edwin Amenta notes in the *Wiley-Blackwell Companion to Political Sociology*, "Political Sociology provides a space for approaches that exist at the margins or cross the boundaries of sociology or political science, or have not yet

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Press, 1999); See also, "Theories of Religious Diversity," *Internet Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, October 24, 2018, <https://web.archive.org/web/20180327013547/https://www.iep.utm.edu/reli-div/>

<sup>28</sup> For examples see: Paul Hedges and Alan Race, *Christian Approaches to Other Faiths* (London: SCM Press, 2008); Jacques Dupuis, *Toward a Christian Theology of Religious Pluralism* (Maryknoll: Orbis Books, 2002); James Fredericks, *Faith Among Faiths: Christian Theology and Non-Christian Religions* (New York: Paulist Press, 1999); Mariasusai Dhavamony, *Ecumenical Theology of World Religions* (Rome: Pontifica Universita Gregoriana, 2003) among others.

<sup>29</sup> For a history of notable influences, see Anthony Orum and John Dale, *Political Sociology: Power and Participation in the Modern World* (New York: Oxford University Press), 3-21.



established themselves as mainstream within either.”<sup>30</sup> In respect to this dissertation, the field is relevant in that it specializes in the study of “informal modes of democratic participation and on the social and cultural embeddedness...that shape formal institutions.”<sup>31</sup> As I note in my methods section in Chapter 4, my surveys were intended to look at the broader U.S. public instead of at political elites of formal political processes. The concepts of Political Exclusivism/Inclusivism/Pluralism that I develop also concern themselves more with cultural perceptions of Others than about formal institutional policy. Finally, much of my analysis of Political Exclusivism draws upon “informal modes of participation” (such as engagement in partisan social media groups) that are commonly utilized in Political Sociology research.<sup>32</sup>

The theory of social capital was first introduced by Sociologist Jane Jacobs in her *The Death and Life of Great American Cities*. Her analysis there considered how impoverished neighborhoods were becoming more “isolated and isolating...resulting in a loss of social capital.”<sup>33</sup> Her work focused on how disadvantaged neighborhoods often exhibited a chronic lack of trust between citizens, leading to spiraling crime as well as a host of other negative effects.

Jacob’s theories were expanded upon greatly in the 1990’s and early 2000’s by Robert Putnam. Putnam, in his *Bowling Alone*, separates social capital into two forms – bonding and bridging. Bonding social capital describes activities between members of homogenous

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<sup>30</sup>Edwin Amenta, “Introduction,” in *The Wiley-Blackwell Companion to Political Sociology*, eds. Edwin Amenta, Kate Nash, and Alan Scott (Hoboken:Wiley-Blackwell Publishing, 2012), xxii.

<sup>31</sup> Amenta, “Introduction,” xxiii.

<sup>32</sup> See Brad Loader and Dianne Mercea, “Networking Democracy? Social Media Innovations in Participatory Politics,” *Information, Communication and Society* 14, no. 6 (Summer 2012): 757-769; Ann Mische et. al., “Symposium: the Implications of Social Media for Democracy,” *States, Power, and Society* 19, no. 1 (Fall 2013): 1-36.

<sup>33</sup> Jane Jacobs, *The Death and Life of Great American Cities* (New York: Random House, 1961), 138.



communities which are designed to “strengthen solidarity...and undergird in-group loyalty.” He gives examples here of activities within ethnic fraternal organizations, faith communities, and exclusive country clubs. Bridging social capital, in contrast, is social capital that develops when individuals work with members of out-groups. This allows for “linkage to external assets...and the development of a broader sense of identity.” Here he cites movements such as the civil rights movement as well as ecumenical and interfaith organizations.<sup>34</sup> Putnam’s research has since become a benchmark for the development of the theory of social capital, and is one of the most cited works within the field of Political Sociology.<sup>35</sup> Putnam was also highly influential for one of the founders of Interreligious Studies, Eboo Patel. Putnam’s work was cited specifically in Putnam’s “Toward a Field of Interfaith Studies,” and is often incorporated into Patel’s other works.<sup>36</sup> Bridging and bonding social capital are discussed at several points in the later chapters of this book, particularly in relation to the development of Political Pluralism.

## SOCIOLOGY OF KNOWLEDGE

A central discussion point of my dissertation is the ways in which communities and institutions construct and justify a particular vision of “truth” in relationship to the Other. In this regard I believe it is helpful to reference the Sociology of Knowledge. The Sociology of Knowledge, to quote Sociologist Doyle McCarthy, is “not a specialized area within sociology like sociology of the family or the study of stratification. Instead...its ideas address the broadest

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<sup>34</sup> Robert Putnam, *Bowling Alone: The Collapse and Revival of American Community* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 2000), 21-23.

<sup>35</sup> Arnaldo Bagnasco, “Trust and Social Capital,” in *The Wiley-Blackwell Companion to Political Sociology*, eds. Edwin Amenta, Kate Nash, and Alan Scott (Hoboken: Wiley-Blackwell Publishing, 2012), 254.

<sup>36</sup> Patel, “Toward a Field of Interfaith Studies,”



sociological questions about...the cultural foundations of cognition and perception.” She notes that in this manner, “The Sociology of Knowledge may be thought of as an ‘approach’ or interpretive lens” as well as a formal field.<sup>37</sup>

As with many disciplines of Sociology, the Sociology of Knowledge traces its earliest foundations to Émile Durkheim (1858-1907). Durkheim, in his *The Elementary Forms of Religious Life*, describes what he calls *représentations collectives* or “collective representations” – material artifacts that serve as communal symbols of meaning for a particular community.<sup>38</sup> These core ideas were further developed by a number of theorists in the early-to-mid 20<sup>th</sup> Century, most notably Karl Mannheim in *Ideology and Utopia* in 1936 and Peter Berger and Thomas Luckman in their *The Social Construction of Reality* in 1966.<sup>39</sup> Their theories will be central in the analysis that makes up this dissertation.

Mannheim, in his *Ideology and Utopia*, argues that there are two substantial forces at play in any given society. The first is ideology. Ideology, he argues, makes up “the characteristics and composition of the total structure of the mind of this epoch or of this group.”<sup>40</sup> In many ways an ideology can be thought of as making up the mental ‘scaffolding’ of a belief system. Mannheim believed these scaffolds largely operate in the sub-conscious, and provide structure for individuals’ opinions and actions. Individuals also have multiple ideologies, based on the varying groups they are a part of. At one point he goes so far as to claim that “there is no sphere of life...that is not smothered in ideologies.” These ideologies may arise from an

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<sup>37</sup> Doyle McCarthy, *Knowledge as Culture: The New Sociology of Knowledge* (London: Routledge, 2005), 11.

<sup>38</sup> Émile Durkheim, *The Elementary Forms of Religious Life* (1912, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001), 175. For a more in-depth history and interpretation of Durkheim’s collective representations see Walter Pickering, *Durkheim and Representations* (London: Routledge, 2000).

<sup>39</sup> Karl Mannheim, *Ideology and Utopia: An Introduction to the Sociology of Knowledge* (1936, London: Routledge, 2002); Peter Berger and Thomas Luckman, *The Social Construction of Reality* (New York: Random House, 1966).

<sup>40</sup> Mannheim, *Ideology and Utopia: An Introduction to the Sociology of Knowledge*, 49.



individual's class, gender, age, race, profession, or any other social group that is capable of creating a community.<sup>41</sup>

A central drive of Mannheim's work is to "unmask" ideologies and bring their structure to light. He argues that, "we seek to bring to light these unconscious processes, not in order to annihilate the mortal existence of persons making certain statements, but in order...to unmask the function they serve."<sup>42</sup>

One difference here between my analysis and that of Mannheim is that I do not treat ideology solely as an unconscious "superstructure" of belief. Rather, I place much more value in the numerous artifacts used to justify a given ideological construction. This is most clearly seen in the field of religion, which makes explicit truth claims within its holy texts and/or through a particular theological doctrine. It can also be seen in the numerous 'memes' and other social media conversations that I use as examples in this text. These cultural artifacts reinforce a given belief, act as a 'litmus test' to judge if an individual is straying from constructed 'truth,' and often inspire adherents to continue to believe in the ideology. In this way my analysis is closer to that of Peter Berger and Thomas Luckman. They argue that individuals "objectify" a given belief through the creation of both physical objects (sacred texts, architecture etc.) as well as social relations (rituals, roles etc.). These objectifications assist in what Berger calls "world maintenance" by giving concrete form to an ideological construction and inspiring individuals to

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<sup>41</sup> Karl Mannheim, "Structures of Thinking," in *The Portable Karl Mannheim*, eds. David Kettler, Volker Meja, and Nico Stehr (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1982), 356.

<sup>42</sup> Karl Mannheim, "The Problem of a Sociology of Knowledge," in *Essays on the Sociology of Knowledge*, ed. Paul Kecskemeti (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1952), 141. See also, Peter Baehr, "The Problem of 'Unmasking' in *Ideology and Utopia*: Karl Mannheim, Karl Jaspers and Hannah Arendt," (Presentation Paper, *American Sociological Association* in Las Vegas Nevada, August 2011).



“internalize” the given worldview.<sup>43</sup> This work will frequently reference popular media (memes and social media posts) that act as artifacts for certain political communities.

My work does, however, align closely with Karl Mannheim’s second major category – that of Utopia. Where the role of ideology is primarily about sustaining a particular world system or status quo, utopias are about envisioning a new and different ideal state. This state is “incongruous with the immediate situation” and drives individuals to “shatter the order of things” through social change.<sup>44</sup> Although Utopias are presented as ideals, they are still acted upon as if they have at least some possibility of being actualized. In a lecture given in 1930 Mannheim noted, “By utopia I do not mean an unreal portrayal of the future... but [instead] a giving to the world a meaning which is viewed as a possibility for its future.”<sup>45</sup>

These utopias allow for the reinterpretation of one’s own history as well as their future course. Mannheim writes in *Ideology and Utopia*, “Utopia contains the direction, the point of view, the perspective, and the set of questions from which the present and the past become comprehensible.” Thus utopias provide individuals with both a hopeful future bearing and a new sense of their own historical identity. Together these have transformative effects. As Mannheim writes, “As soon as utopia appears, a substantial transformation occurs, a new type of [hu]man comes into being.”<sup>46</sup>

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<sup>43</sup> Berger and Luckman, *The Social Construction of Reality*, 12-15, 29; Peter Berger, *The Sacred Canopy: Elements of a Sociological Theory of Religion* (1967, New York: Random House, 1990), 47.

<sup>44</sup> Mannheim, *Ideology and Utopia: An Introduction to the Sociology of Knowledge*, 341.

<sup>45</sup> Karl Mannheim, *Sociology as Political Education*, ed. David Kettler and Colin Loader (New Brunswick, NJ: Transaction, 2001), 22; Peter Berger, *The Sacred Canopy: Elements of a Sociological Theory of Religion* (1967, Norwell: Anchor Press, 1990), 13.

<sup>46</sup> Mannheim, *Sociology as Political Education*, 24. I purposefully de-gendered his quote here.



The power of utopic thinking is also a central philosophical tenant of Appreciative Inquiry. Appreciative Inquiry holds that “the images we create in our minds about the future direct our present actions and create that very future.”<sup>47</sup> Appreciative Inquiry practitioners label this the “Anticipatory Principle.” David Cooperrider and Diana Whitney, two of the founders of Appreciate Inquiry, mirror Mannheim when they say that “human systems are forever projecting ahead of themselves a horizon of expectation (in their talk in the hallways, in the metaphors and language they use) that brings the future powerfully into the present as a mobilizing agent.”<sup>48</sup>

But while Manheim was primarily concerned with deconstructing utopias, Appreciative Inquiry practitioners seek to deliberately harness this tendency and direct it towards more positive futures. Appreciative Inquiry theorist Jaqueline Kelm notes that, “In any given moment we have the opportunity to construct a future that embraces new possibilities. What comes next is an emergent reality that reflects our steps in that direction.” As a research tool, Appreciate Inquiry aims to ask provoking questions that elicit new utopic images. Their method is designed to help subjects craft a vision that can then be actualized.

Both Mannheim and Appreciative Inquiry also warn of the dangers of a loss of the utopic. Mannheim argues that if individuals lose that ability to describe utopia, they also quickly lose all motivation and a sense of personal agency. Again, from *Ideology and Utopia*:

“The disappearance of utopia brings about a static state of affairs in which man himself becomes no more than a thing. We would be faced then with the greatest paradox imaginable, namely that man, who has achieved the highest degree of rational mastery of existence, is left without ideals becoming a mere creature of impulses. Thus, after a long, tortuous, but heroic development, just at the highest stage of awareness, when history is ceasing to be blind fate, and is becoming more

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<sup>47</sup> Jaqueline Bascobert Kelm, *Appreciative Living: The Principles of Appreciative Inquiry in Personal Life* (Charleston: Venet Publishers, 2015), 71.

<sup>48</sup> David Cooperrider and Diana Whitney, *A Positive Revolution in Change: Appreciative Inquiry* (San Francisco: Barrett-Koehler Publishers, 1999), 17.



and more man's own creation, with the relinquishment of utopias, man would lose his will to shape history and therewith his ability to understand it."<sup>49</sup>

Similarly, Appreciative Inquiry researcher Debbie Ford explains, "At any given moment...we are guided by a vision map or a default map. Choices made from our default map-our repetitive, automatic programming-do not nourish our flames, nor do they move us closer to our dreams." She goes on to argue that without a vision map, individuals "are at the whim of other's visions...or follow the familiar by rote."<sup>50</sup>

This loss of the utopic is incredibly important to American political conversation. As I will discuss further in the later chapters of this text, many Americans are highly disengaged from politics. They cynically believe that the current system can never be changed, and give up the possibility of a utopic U.S. This inability to imagine a better world has numerous consequences, perhaps the most important being a weaker democratic system.

Finally, I should mention that keeping in line with the philosophy of Appreciative Inquiry, I see this dissertation as contributing to the creation of new Utopic ideals, rather than as just a positivistic confirmation of static reality. As such, I am less concerned with "empirical validity" than a purely social science paper would be. Individuals opinions, statements and intentions are all being constantly created (and recreated!) by those around them. My research (particularly my second research study) was designed to elicit positive and creative thinking on the part of participants. Similarly, my proposed solutions (i.e. encouraging mutual activities between groups, minimizing toxic media, etc....) are predicated on the hope that individuals have the agency to create new and more positive ways of living, and ultimately new truths.

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<sup>49</sup> Mannheim, *Ideology and Utopia: An Introduction to the Sociology of Knowledge*, 236.

<sup>50</sup> Debbie Ford, *The Right Questions* (New York: Harper Collins, 2004), 23-26.



## Chapter 1: A Primer on Exclusivism

In this chapter I develop my operational definition of “exclusivism.” I trace the term’s roots within theology, particularly the Theology of Religions, and define a series of core characteristics that transfer over into the political realm described in Chapter 2.

Exclusivism is one of three broad categories (the others being Inclusivism and Pluralism) commonly used by those in religious studies to describe attitudes towards other traditions. Chapter 3 of this dissertation will return to Inclusivism and Pluralism in much greater detail, but for now it is enough to understand that exclusivism is by far the most conservative of the three orientations. I argue that it is predominately defined by the following features:

- a) Truth as Singular – A belief that there is a single, unifying source of human transformation that is categorically different than other sources of knowledge,
- b) Ethic of Purity - A resulting focus on purity of belief and practice that is highly critical of competing systems. This often leads to a degree of isolation from other systems.
- c) Proselytization/Violence – When the other must be encountered, the only terms accepted by the Exclusivist is the removal and defeat of the opposing party. The exact method may vary, but in the end state, one’s own tradition must reign triumphant.

### EXCLUSIVIST CHARACTERISTICS – PHILOSOPHICAL UNITY

Exclusivist theologies work from the presupposition that there is *one* real source of human transcendence. This theological formation is predicated upon a belief that one’s religion is *sui generis*, and expresses a fundamental truth that is missing in other forms of religious



expression. The home religion is assumed to be unique and often has direct ontological ties to the chosen Godhead itself.

An excellent and direct quote from the Christian tradition that reflects this teaching is John 14:6,

“Jesus said to him [Thomas], ‘I am the way the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me.’”

This quote is cited extremely often by theologians as primary source material for an Exclusivist account of Christian theology. It is beyond the scope of this paper to delve into an exegetical debate over John, but pertinent to this conversation is the direct association of Jesus with truth followed immediately by a statement noting that the path to God comes only through Him.

Another example can be in the classic of Hindu Scriptures, the *Bhagavad-Gita*. In it Krishna similarly says,

Quickly I come  
To those who offer me  
Every action,  
Worship me only,  
...I shall save them from confusion  
From Mortal sorrow  
...Lodge your mind in me:  
Thus you shall dwell in me.  
Here and hereafter.<sup>51</sup>

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<sup>51</sup> *The Song of God: Bhagavad-Gita*, trans. Swami Prabhavananda and Christopher Isherwood (New York: Mentor Books, 1954), 98.



Again we see association of the divine (this time represented by Krishna, an avatar of the Hindu God Vishnu) with both access to special clarity (“I shall save them from confusion”) as well as a spiritual path that has both earthly and heavenly benefits (“thus you shall dwell in me. Here and hereafter.”).

In both of these above instances we see divinity offering religious adherents a privileged knowledge understanding. Within Christian theology this is often referred as “Special Revelation.” As Swiss Calvinist Emil Brunner, notes “The world with a million fingers points toward God, but it cannot reveal Him to us...who God is – God Himself must tell us in His revelation...”<sup>52</sup>

In most traditions, the purpose of Special Revelation is ‘salvation’ or a comparable ideal spiritual state. This is often the central focus of conversations within Theology of Religions. However, for our discussion it is important to note that knowledge given via Special Revelation will also extend into the realm of ethical action. Conservative Christians often treat the Protestant Bible as an inerrant source of revelation, and as a text it contains a large body of moral and ethical guidance as well as soteriological claims. This may include the obligation to spread that tradition (“Go then and make disciples of all nations.”)<sup>53</sup> or any number of ethical guidelines (i.e. family relations, relationship to governments etc.)<sup>5455</sup>

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<sup>52</sup> Emil Brummer, *Our Faith* (London: SCM Press, 1936), 16.

<sup>53</sup> Matthew 28:19 (NIV)

<sup>54</sup> For Biblical examples of verses on family relations see Galatians, 5:25, 1 Peter 3:7; for relationship to government see Romans, 1:13 1-7, 1 Peter 2:13-25. Again, it is beyond the scope of this paper to engage in debates about interpretation of particular verses. The central point here is that Special Revelation is broader than just conversations about heaven, enlightenment etc. It entails a complete vision of the good that is applied often and in wide range of situations. As such, it creates moral obligations on the part of believers.

<sup>55</sup> Here I think it is also important to note that there are interpretations of Special Revelation that can be considered Inclusivist or Pluralist as well.



Other forms of knowing, such as reason or experience, may be used to ascertain a certain degree of truth. Commonly this is referred to as “General Revelation.” However, these independent sources of knowledge are looked upon with skepticism unless they are in some way purified or put into alignment with “Ultimate” truth filtered through their own religious system.

This skepticism is expressed very well through the writings of Reformation founder Martin Luther. Luther was famously harsh on “reason” as a source of knowledge. He argued “enlightened” reason (reason refined by religious belief) would “strive not against faith...but rather further and advance it.” However, human reasoning would more often than not lead one astray, especially if not first informed by the truth of Special Revelation, “it rarely comes to the aid of spiritual things, but--more frequently than not--struggles against the divine Word, treating with contempt all that emanates from God.”<sup>56</sup> With this in mind Luther frequently railed against reason in his sermons and other public debates.

This failure to accept the rationality or critique of those outside of one’s Special Revelation is a central element of the Exclusivist platform. Alan Race describes the Exclusivist viewpoint as treating ‘outside’ information as “so distorted so as to be not only worthless but also culpable....it is an idolatrous counterfeit.”<sup>57</sup> Dutch Reformed theologian J.H. Bavinck (1896-1964) expresses this theology clearly when he argues, “The real Christ differs radically from the so-called saviors conjured up by the religions of man. His gospel is not the answer to man’s inquiry...but rather a condemnation of all such human fancy and speculation.”<sup>58</sup>

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<sup>56</sup> Martin Luther, “Table Talk...On Justification.” In *Martin Luther: Selections from his Writings*, ed. John Dillenberger (1958, New York: Anchor Library of Religion, 1999), 161.

<sup>57</sup> Alan Race, *Making Sense of Religious Pluralism: Shaping Theology of Religions for our Times*, 15.

<sup>58</sup> Johan Herman Bavinck, “God and the World” in *The J.H. Bavinck Reader*, ed. John Bolt (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans Publishing, 2009) as quoted in Daniel Strange, “Perilous Exchange, Precious Good News: A Reformed ‘Subversive



Martin Luther takes an even stronger stand, and argues that individuals who trust in reason outside of Special Revelation find themselves deluded into believing they have found “the Holy Spirit” (i.e. truth) but instead find hellfire: “But since the devil's bride, Reason, that pretty whore, comes in and thinks she's wise, and what she says, what she thinks, is from the Holy Spirit, who can help us, then? Not judges, not doctors, no king or emperor...we are doomed by that false knowledge to hell itself.”

Thus we see that the Exclusivist model prizes a particular source of knowledge, which not only serves as the basis for their religious practice, but which is deemed essential to human transformation. Further, this knowledge is necessary for the ‘proper’ functioning of reason or other human faculties. We shall now turn to the second relevant characteristic of Exclusivism, their treatment of religious others.

## EXCLUSIVIST CHARACTERISTICS – PURITY AND ISOLATION

Since Exclusivist religion is reductive in its conception of transformation, the presence of others that exist outside of the community pose a significant problem. The existence of other groups means that there will be competing claims about God, the holy life etc. Thus, these communities must decide how to go about relating with the broader public. I will consider these responses in three broad categories – withdrawal, conversion, or violence.

For some Exclusivist communities, the default position is to withdraw. If the stated goal of your tradition is to experience a relationship with the divine, there is not necessarily a reason

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Fulfilment’ Interpretation of Other Religions,” in *Only One Way?*, eds. Gavin D’Costa, Paul Knitter, Daniel Strange (London: SCM Press, 2011), 129.



to actively seek association with outsiders. This style of exclusivist engagement can be found in many forms of religion that place heavy weight on their “particularism.” For example, there are many forms of Judaism that heavily focus on the “chosenness” of Jews as God’s people, citing Hebrew Bible sources such as Deuteronomy 14:2. “For you are a holy people to the LORD your God, and the LORD has chosen you to be a people for His own possession out of all the peoples who are on the face of the earth.” Sources such as these focus on the uniqueness of the religious community’s way of life, without necessarily demanding engagement. As Jewish scholar Michael Kogan notes, “during some stages of Jewish history, there was a heavy focus on the particularism of the Jewish people...Conceived narrowly, particularism leads us to believe that God is interested exclusively in the Chosen people, while remaining indifferent to the rest of humanity.”<sup>5960</sup>

The tendency in these groups is to form communities that exist in separation from others. This may exist in the form of isolated communities such as a Jewish Kibbutz, where member share in all aspects of life together, including the growth of their own food. Or, it may resemble the “home school” movement in the United States, wherein small communities of conservative Christians would gather at home to educate their children. Evangelical leader R.J. Rushdoony (1916-2001) was well known for arguing for just such exclusivist isolationism centered on

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<sup>59</sup> Michael Kogan, “Toward a Pluralist Theology of Judaism,” in *The Myth of Religious Superiority: A Multifaith Exploration*, ed. Paul Knitter (Maryknoll: Orbis Books, 2005), 105.

<sup>60</sup> Feelings of “Chosenness” are not unique to the Jewish tradition. Scholar Johan Galtung argues that “a feeling of chosen-ness” is often associated with religious conflict. This “chosen-ness” gives the believers justification to do violence “against those who have chosen something else, the infidels.” This “chosen-ness” gives the believers justification to do violence “against those who have chosen something else, the infidels.” Chosen-ness can take many forms, from nationalism (Chosen Nation) to racism/ethnicism (Chosen Race/People) to sexism (Chosen Gender – men over women) and even to classism (Chosen Class – prosperity gospel arguments) or speciesism (Chosen Species – humans above nature). Johan Galtung, “Religions Hard and Soft,” in *The Ashgate Research Companion to Religion and Conflict Resolution*, ed. Less Marsden (Burlington, VT: Ashgate Publishing Company, 2012), 249.



education, “To control the future requires the control of education and of the child. Hence, for Christians to tolerate statist education, or to allow their children to be trained thereby, means to renounce power in society, to renounce their children, and to deny Christ's Lordship over their life.”<sup>61</sup> By allowing children to receive any form of education that wasn't explicitly Christian (more specifically his form of Fundamentalist Christianity) was essentially opening them to the 'lesser' and heretical forms of knowing discussed in the last section. It is preferable to instead break away, ensuring that there is a purity of teaching maintained.

A byproduct of this isolation is that members of exclusivist groups often have little-to-no knowledge of outside cultures, and the knowledge they do have is laced with distrust that has been instilled by the polemics they have learned from their own tradition. This is borne out by a number of studies in the U.S. and abroad. For example, numerous studies have shown that Christians who hold highly orthodox viewpoints about their own traditions (including the Exclusivist belief that Jesus is the only source of salvation) are more likely to have negative viewpoints of Muslims, Jews, and atheists/agnostics,<sup>62</sup> misunderstanding both their community demographics and beliefs. This includes understanding their racial/ethnic makeup (ex: believing that all Muslims are primarily Arab) or their political orientation (ex: that Muslims are highly sympathetic towards jihadists/Atheists are highly liberal).<sup>63</sup> Staunch religious Exclusivists are

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<sup>61</sup> R.J. Rushdoony, *An Informed Faith: The Position Papers of R. J. Rushdoony* (Vallecito: Chalcedon Books, 2018), 45.

<sup>62</sup> Wade Rowatt and Lewis Franklin, “Christian Orthodoxy, Religious Fundamentalism, and Right Wing Authoritarianism as Predictors of Prejudice,” *The International Journal for the Psychology of Religion* 14, no. 2 (Fall 2004): 125-138.; Brian Laythe, Deborah Finkel, Lee A. Kirkpatrick, “Predicting Prejudice from Religious Fundamentalism,” *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion* 40, no. 1 (March 2001): 1-10.

<sup>63</sup> Nirvi Shah. “Combating Anti-Muslim Bias” *The Education Digest* 77, no. 3 (November 2011), 32-35; Maxine Najle, “Atheists, Devils, and Communists: Cognitive Mapping of Attitudes and Stereotypes of Atheists,” *HIM* 31 (Fall 2012), 1779-1837; Dalia Mogahed, “Perceptions: Moderate vs. Extremist Views in the Muslim World,” *Gallup Special Report*. (Princeton: The Gallup Organization, 2006).



also much less likely to allow “Non-Christians” into the inner circle of friends<sup>64</sup> and more likely to see other traditions as a threat to both their own religion and to American Democracy.<sup>65</sup>

Returning to the topic of education, the lack of prioritizing knowledge of the Other can also be seen easily in the educational priorities of Exclusivist institutions. For example, in order to be an ordained minister in the Lutheran Church – Missouri Synod (LCMS), one must take 98 units, of which only four are dedicated to knowing traditions outside of the LCMS. These four are divided into two, two-unit courses; one covering all other Christian denominations, and one considering all other religious traditions “and their errors.”<sup>66</sup> They are also instructed “not to make it the practice to worship or to participate in the sacramental rites in churches other than our own fellowship” and are expressly forbidden to “officiate in joint services with clergymen of churches not in fellowship with ours.”<sup>67</sup>

## EXCLUSIVIST CHARACTERISTICS – PROSELYTIZATION and VIOLENCE

In tension with this isolationist tendency is the universal claims of Exclusivist religion itself. Typically Religions do not just make claims about purity or chosenness, but also about their universality. For Christians this is encapsulated in the Great Commission, “Go therefore

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<sup>64</sup> Miroslav Volf and Ryan McAnnally-Linz, “A Christian Perspective on Interreligious Friendship,” in *Friendship Across Religions*, ed. Alon Goshen-Gottstein (London: Lexington Books, 2015), 47.

<sup>65</sup> “U.S. Muslims Concerned About their Place in Society, but Continue to Believe in the American Dream,” *Pew Research Center* (July 26, 2017).  
<https://web.archive.org/web/20180805222032/http://assets.pewresearch.org/wp-content/uploads/sites/11/2017/07/09105631/U.S.-MUSLIMS-FULL-REPORT-with-population-update-v2.pdf>;  
Richard S. Balkin et. al. “Religious Identity, Bias, and Cultural Diversity,” *Journal of Counseling and Development* 87, no. 4 (Fall 2009), 420-427.

<sup>66</sup> *Concordia Theological Seminary Student Handbook, 2018-2019*. Concordia Theological Seminary.  
[https://web.archive.org/web/20181105070211/https://my.ctsfw.edu/file/dean-of-students-documents/2018-2019\\_Student\\_Handbook.pdf](https://web.archive.org/web/20181105070211/https://my.ctsfw.edu/file/dean-of-students-documents/2018-2019_Student_Handbook.pdf)

<sup>67</sup> *Concordia Theological Seminary Student Handbook, 2018-2019*, 46.



and make disciples of all nations.”<sup>68</sup> Exclusivist believers often have a mandate to engage with the wider world, and transform it in the vision of the Godhead.

It should be noted here that one does not have to be an Exclusivist to feel a religious calling to engage productively with the world. When our conversation moves toward Inclusivism and Pluralism, we will see several variations on the theme of religious transformation. However, what sets Exclusivism apart is its rigid disregard for alternate paths to that transformation. Since it is highly skeptical of “errant belief” the ultimate aim of an interaction is for what Paul Knitter calls “Total Replacement.”<sup>69</sup> The ethical mandate is to proselytize, debate, or do whatever else is necessary to stop the opposing side. In Knitter’s terms, “in the end [your tradition] must move in and take their place.”<sup>70</sup> Alan Race likewise described this process as “a repudiation of any other tradition’s teachings.”<sup>71</sup>

Throughout history this has been a primary occupation of religious movements that seek to convert other traditions or otherwise change the wider culture in their own image. This includes examples as far ranging as the Christian discipline of “missiology” to the Islamic concept of Da’wah to Buddhist “Dharma Bhanacks.” Missouri Synod Lutherans, mentioned above, may only have four units dedicated to non-Lutheran traditions, but they do have 24 dedicated specifically to “Teaching the Faith” and general statement noting that “all courses are directed toward the effective spreading of the Gospel.”<sup>72</sup>

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<sup>68</sup> Matthew 28:16-17. NIV Translation.

<sup>69</sup> Knitter. *Theologies of Religions*, 23.

<sup>70</sup> Knitter. *Theologies of Religions*, 25.

<sup>71</sup> Alan Race, *Making Sense of Religious Pluralism: Shaping Theology of Religions for our Times*, 21.

<sup>72</sup> *Concordia Theological Seminary Student Handbook, 2018-2019*, 23.



In its strongest forms, Exclusivist theologies seek to go beyond debate or dialogue, but instead seek the active repression or even destruction of opposing ideas. Martin Marty, in his text *When Faiths Collide*, notes that very often “strangers are menaces.” He argues that it is “a small jump from seeing the other’s faith as wrong to perceiving them as a threat”.<sup>73</sup> If one’s eternal soul (and/or the ‘soul’ of one’s community) is at stake in a conversation, then the ‘end’ of self-protection justifies any means, including “silencing the stranger through violence.”<sup>74</sup>

Exclusivist theologies have a long history of association with religious persecution, colonialism, and general ill-treatment of religious “others.” One of the most well-known theorists of Fundamentalism is Mark Juergensmeyer. In his seminal text *Terror in the Mind of God*, Juergensmeyer considers the viewpoints of religious extremists around the globe. Based on an extensive series of interviews, he argues that religious militants conceive of themselves as engaged in a “cosmic war”.<sup>75</sup> This war takes place on both the physical and the spiritual levels. Opposing traditions are seen as “tools of the evil one” in a process he calls “Satanization.” Opponents are “endowed with both superhuman and subhuman qualities” that make them both unbeatable and yet worthy of execution.<sup>76</sup> Satanization leads militants to believe that there is no “ultimate victory” while on Earth, but instead hope should be placed in the afterlife where “extreme or even suicidal efforts will be met with divine blessing and reward.”<sup>77</sup> These beliefs make conflict incredibly hard to avoid, as adherents believe “war is perpetual...not as a metaphor or figure of speech, but as a literal fact.”<sup>78</sup>

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<sup>73</sup> Martin Marty, *When Faiths Collide* (Hoboken: Wiley-Blackwell), 54.

<sup>74</sup> Marty, *When Faiths Collide*, 54.

<sup>75</sup> Mark Juergensmeyer, *Terror in the Mind of God: The Global Rise of Religious Violence* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2003), 145.

<sup>76</sup> Juergensmeyer, *Terror in the Mind of God: The Global Rise of Religious Violence*, 183.

<sup>77</sup> Juergensmeyer, *Terror in the Mind of God: The Global Rise of Religious Violence*, 185.

<sup>78</sup> Juergensmeyer, *Terror in the Mind of God: The Global Rise of Religious Violence*, 157.



Often this may even include members of their own tradition. Scott Appleby writes “Fundamentalists define ‘outsiders’ to include lukewarm, compromising, or liberal coreligionists as well as people of another or even no faith.”<sup>79</sup> History is replete with ‘civil wars’ among religious sects whose beliefs are nearly identical. It also demonstrates longstanding practices of ‘extreme vetting’ of one’s own community, such as in cases of Inquisition.<sup>80</sup>

Also of interest on this topic is that for many Exclusivists, there is a “feeling” of being threatened by outsiders, even when that threat is in actuality inconsequential. This trend has been on full display in recent years in the United States by members of the Christian Right. Pastor Robert Jeffress, a Dallas Southern Baptist minister and religious activist, asserted in a 2014 interview that “Attacks on American Christians are ongoing, led by none other than Satan himself.” When asked what he meant by persecutions, he replied “Now, obviously there is a spectrum of persecution that people experience. That spectrum can range from not being invited to a dinner party because you are too opinionated, all the way to being tortured and even executed because you will not recant your faith in Jesus Christ.”<sup>81</sup>

The above quote is helpful in demonstrating that for Exclusivists, persecution can come to mean any number of small insults (not being invited to dinner) which are treated categorically as equivalent to violent repression. The process of Satanization means that the wider culture *must* be plotting against the welfare of one’s own religious community, and feelers are always out for

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<sup>79</sup> Scott Appleby, *The Ambivalence of the Sacred: Religion, Violence, and Reconciliation* (Lanham: Rowman and Littlefield Publishers, 1999), 4.

<sup>80</sup> For an in-depth look at both inter and intra-religious persecution, see Mark Juergensmeyer, Margo Kitts, and Michael Jerryson, *The Oxford Handbook of Religion and Violence* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013).

<sup>81</sup> Quote taken from Rob Boston, “Persecution Complex: Religious Right Groups Claim Christianity Is Oppressed In America. The Truth Is Quite Different,” *Church and State* 71, no. 8 (September 2018).  
<http://web.a.ebscohost.com/ccl.idm.oclc.org/ehost/detail/detail?vid=1&andsid=b9c48518-f344-466f-afb1-046ef7fc1d39%40sessionmgr4009&dbdata=JnNpdGU9ZWwhvc3QtbGl2ZSdzY29wZT1zaXRl#AN=131544641&db=a-ph>



examples of that ill-will made manifest. We will return to this topic later as we begin to explore how Exclusivists conceive of their relationship to the larger body politic.

## EXCLUSIVISM AND LOVE

One element that I do think is important to note in this discussion is that it is not unavoidably such that Exclusivist believers will hate or otherwise act with violence towards an outside faction. American evangelicals are quick to dissociate themselves from extremists or formally ‘fundamentalist’ Christian factions. Evangelical language often speaks of a moral mandate for believers to “act out of Christian love.”<sup>82</sup> Many Evangelical missiology, development, or international aid texts begin their conversations with reminders that the source of their religion is also the source of love, compassion, forgiveness. Evangelical writer Bryan Meyers, A Fuller Seminary professor and frequent consultant to Christian NGO’s, is quick to begin his treaty on working with the poor by saying “We are called to witness God’s love. Not just with the proclamation of the Gospel, but with all of our words and deeds....we are called to be examples, and that must carry into every discussion and every interaction we have with all of God’s creatures.”<sup>83</sup>

Similarly, Exclusivist believers are not by necessity anti-intellectual. There is a persistent portrayal of Evangelicals as “gullible and insecure people who unplug their brains in order to believe anything that is written in the Bible.”<sup>84</sup> This stereotype ignores the long history of highly

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<sup>82</sup> Wendy Fletcher, “A Missiology of Love: in Action,” *Reformation: Then, Now, and Onward. Varied Voices, Insightful Interpretations* 38, no. 1 (November 2017), 1-13.

<sup>83</sup> Bryan Meyers, *Walking with the Poor: Principles and Practices of Transformational Development* (Maryknoll: Orbis Books, 2011).

<sup>84</sup> Knitter, *Theologies of Religion*. 29.



educated theologians who have defended the Evangelical tradition, as well as philosophically complex arguments invented by movement leaders for the purposes of defending the faith.

There is also a certain intuitive reasonableness to the idea that if God is Truth, then church teachings will resonate with our mind's ability to ask questions and draw reasonable conclusions. Much Evangelical thought goes into proving the reasonableness of belief in God.<sup>85</sup> You can also find examples of this type of behavior in other traditions, such as Parimal Patil's Buddhist text, *Against a Hindu God: Buddhist Philosophy of Religion in India*.<sup>86</sup> There Patil traces both a historical and philosophical defense of Buddhist belief versus its Indian contemporary religion Hinduism.

These types of argumentation reflect Martin Luther's comments from earlier pages. Reason can be a powerful tool when it is turned towards 'proving' a particular set of religious beliefs. But the challenge with this viewpoint is that at the end of the day, reason ought *only* be used for the proving of one's own points. It should not be turned towards considering the honest possibility that the viewpoints of the Other are 'real' in any kind of way.

This is a viewpoint of a type of dialogue that acts in a similar manner to a chess game (or as Paul Knitter describes it a "holy competition").<sup>87</sup> You and your competitor are both out to make a point as well as you can. But as a believer in an Exclusivist system, the costs of losing are astronomical – your soul itself. Even if you do not endorse the sorts of extreme steps noted

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<sup>85</sup> Here I make reference to both modern day Evangelical apologists such as William Lane Craig as well as classical philosophical arguments such as the Argument from Design, Anselm's Ontological Argument, etc. For more see William Lane Craig, *Reasonable Faith: Christian Truth and Apologetics* (New York: Crossway, 2008); William Rowe, *Philosophy of Religion: An Introduction* (Belmont: Wadsworth).

<sup>86</sup> Parimal Patil, *Against a Hindu God: Buddhist Philosophy of Religion in India* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2009).

<sup>87</sup> Knitter, *Theologies of Religions*, 41.



earlier in fundamentalists, at the very least your moral obligation is to ‘back out’ of any dialogue if you begin to believe that the other side might be correct. It’s better to walk away from an unfinished match than to face a crisis of faith.

And on this point Evangelical and Fundamentalist position do converge. As Knitter states, it, “The differences between Fundamentalists and Evangelicals were clear, but they were also more a matter of style than of substance. As one specialist put it: “A fundamentalist is an evangelical who is angry about something. Fundamentalists are not just religious conservatives, they are conservatives who are willing to take a stand and to fight.”<sup>88</sup> Both Evangelical and Fundamentalist Christians hold to the belief of the exclusive truth, the difference lies primarily in the degree of threat posed by the other, and by the means used to carry out the proselytization.

As we will see in the research portion of this dissertation, there are examples of Exclusivists acting in a caring manner. However, even when they do coach their language as being “understanding,” they still argue for an ideal future that involves the removal of the Other. This tension demonstrates the limits of Exclusivist thought in accepting a diverse body politic.

## SUMMARY

In summary, in this chapter I have defined three core characteristics of Exclusivists – a) the belief in a single, authoritative conception of truth, and of human growth/transcendence, b) a focus on purity of belief and practice, that often leads to insular communities that practice their own ways of knowing “free of the world’s influence,” and c) the desire to convert or remove any competing system, which are often thought of as a threat. This is not to say that in some instances, Exclusivists may still act lovingly towards an out-group neighbor. However, their

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<sup>88</sup> Knitter, *Theologies of Religions*, 21.



other tendencies make them much more likely to be suspicious of neighbors. In the worst cases they conceive of a world engaged in cosmic war that justifies complete dehumanization of the other in the name of their religious ideals. In the next chapter, we shall turn and see how these same core characteristics become manifest within the political arena.



## **Chapter 2: Political Exclusivism in America**

My discussion will now turn to the relationship between American politics and Exclusivist forms of thought. As we will see, Political Exclusivism is incredibly prevalent within American social constructions of politics. Indeed, in many ways it has become the dominant narrative through which individuals on both sides of the political aisle conceive of the relationship to those with whom they disagree. The negative consequences here are widespread. These include but are not limited to extreme stereotyping of the political other, paranoia about the state of the nation, frequent withdrawal from causes that may build common ground, and violence and the ‘Satanization’ of the other political party.

The primary vehicle through which I see individuals engaging in Political Exclusivism is through partisanship. Here I want to be careful to note that although I will often speak of partisanship in relation to a particular political party or elected official, partisanship also serves a broader, more ideological function. Members of political parties are expected to uphold certain “truths” that are associated with a party, and are judged harshly for any infraction that is seen as countering that agreed upon reality. In this way political leaders are very similar to religious leaders who are charged with guarding their flock’s conception of truth. Any clergy person will tell you of their experiences facing congregants who disagreed with a sermon or who dislike choices made on behalf of the faith community.

This chapter will begin by discussing how I move from Exclusivism as a theological term to one that exists in the political realm. I argue that the same characteristics seen in the last chapter – single conceptions of truth, purity ethics, and an ambivalence towards the other – are all present, only expressed through different institutions and using different images. These



cultural artifacts will be highlighted often, both in the actions of political elites as well as through more populist expressions.

## POLITICAL EXCLUSIVISM AND TRUTH

Within a religious setting, adherents refer directly back to some form of authoritative text or tradition that provides legitimization for their worldview (see comments on Special Revelation in Chapter 1). In a political setting the path to truth is a bit more complicated, at least insofar as modern political institutions are typically a “step removed” from that direct revelation.<sup>89</sup> This being said, institutions have a number of methods by which they can call upon ‘sacred’ narratives to uphold their moral claims. I break these down into three broad categories – a) direct ties back to a religious tradition itself, b) through the creation of ‘civil religion’, or c) by making rationalist claims utilizing “scientific” facts.

As an example of directly tying individuals to overt religious imagery, I will use a recent controversy surrounding President Donald Trump. In October 2018, a billboard was placed on a roadway in Saint Louis, Missouri:

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<sup>89</sup> This was not always the case. In ancient and classical civilizations political figures would commonly go through a process of deification. A few well-known examples include the cults of the Egyptian Pharaohs, Roman Emperors, and Japanese State Shinto. For more see M. David Litwa, *Becoming the Divine: An Introduction to Deification in Western Culture* (Eugene: Wipf and Stock Publishers, 2013).





Figure 1- Word Became Flesh Advertisement

Here President Donald Trump is listed on a public billboard, alongside a Scriptural verse from John 1:14, “The Word became Flesh and made his dwelling among us. We have seen his glory, the glory of the one and only Son, who came from the Father full of grace and truth.”<sup>90</sup>

When it was released, it was cited by many as directly equating Trump to Jesus himself. Clearly John 1:14 was intended to be in reference to Christ. When asked, the organizers denied the claims, making this argument in their defense: “Our billboard IS NOT equating Jesus with President Donald Trump. Salvation comes only from a personal relationship with Jesus Christ, not any man. But God does send his messengers to us, and just as King David liberated the

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<sup>90</sup> Taken from Greg Evans, “A controversial billboard featuring Donald Trump and a Bible verse has been taken Down,” *The Independent*, November 6, 2018, <https://web.archive.org/web/20181118231722/https://www.indy100.com/article/trump-billboard-god-bible-verse-make-gospel-great-again-st-louis-missouri-8620116>



faithful in his day, President Trump is doing this today...”<sup>91</sup> This language matches the mission statement of the organization, which notes ““We believe God has given American Christians His earthly messenger – Donald J Trump. We follow his words in faith each day!” It also directs Christians to “be loyal to President Trump and trust him in all circumstances” just as the ancient Israelites were faithful to David, Joshua, and the other ancient kings.”<sup>92</sup>

Sociologists of Knowledge such as Peter Berger would argue that a debate over whether or not this group *intended* to directly equate Trump with Jesus largely misses the purpose of the billboard. What is important is that these individuals aimed to tie together the divine cosmos and the human sphere of politics. Berger argues that when “political authority is conceived of as the agent of the gods...human power, government, and punishment become sacramental phenomena, that is, channels by which divine forces are made to impinge upon the lives of men.”<sup>93</sup>

As a corollary, by tying together the divine and the state, “The ruler speaks for the gods, or is a god, and to obey him is to be in a right relationship with the greater cosmos.”<sup>94</sup> This locates human action within a divine framework, and allows individuals to feel justified in following the commands of an earthly leader, even a fallible one. Divine favor creates something of a ‘protective barrier’ from human error, and that individual (or party’s) movement is granted a

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<sup>91</sup> Make the Gospel Great Again Facebook Page, “November 5, 2018 Post” Facebook, November 5, 2018, [https://web.archive.org/web/20181105235708/https://www.facebook.com/MaketheGospelGreatAgain/posts/2119336688317841?\\_tn=-R](https://web.archive.org/web/20181105235708/https://www.facebook.com/MaketheGospelGreatAgain/posts/2119336688317841?_tn=-R)

<sup>92</sup> Make the Gospel Great Again Facebook Page, “About Us,” Facebook, Nov 6, 2018. <http://archive.is/dYtSu> Archived by Snopes, “Did a Billboard in Missouri Show President Trump Alongside a Gospel Quote?” <https://www.snopes.com/fact-check/trump-christ-billboard-st-louis/> Accessed Nov 22, 2018. Snopes does not allow permalink archiving of their webpages.

<sup>93</sup> Peter Berger, *The Sacred Canopy: Elements of a Sociological Theory of Religion*, 34.

<sup>94</sup> Peter Berger, *The Sacred Canopy: Elements of a Sociological Theory of Religion*, 35.



sense of “inevitability, firmness, and durability that is analogous to those qualities as ascribed to the gods themselves.”<sup>95</sup>

Here the use of religious imagery also blends into a certain form of Utopic thinking. Even the name of their group reflects this interpretation of the world. By merging Trumps secular campaign slogan, “make America great again” with Christian symbols (the Gospel) they are indicating a triumphalist narrative of a nation returning to Christian faithfulness. They note on their website that “God protected him from deranged media attacks during his campaign, and we trust he will continue to do so now that he is in office.” Thus the entire “Trump movement” is perceived as an act of divine will.

Apart the use of specifically religious sources, political systems also commonly draw upon their own national history to form what is referred to as “civil religion.” Here the state is imbued with the same sorts of divine reverence as a religion itself. An excellent example of this



Figure 2 - Rotunda of the United States Capital

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<sup>95</sup> Peter Berger, *The Sacred Canopy: Elements of a Sociological Theory of Religion*, 36.



reverence at work is the Rotunda of the United States Capitol in Washington D.C.: The piece prominently features *The Apotheosis of Washington* by artist Constantino Brumidi (1805-1880).<sup>96</sup>

Apotheosis may reference either a model of “excellence or perfection” that is seen as being divinely inspired (Apo = “from” and theo = “God” in Greek), OR the elevation of a person to the status of divinity. As a term it is commonly used in reference to the cults of Roman emperors, and the piece is deliberately designed to be reminiscent of Greco-Roman art and classical Christian basilicas.<sup>97</sup> The official architectural website for the U.S. government describes the architecture as featuring, “George Washington rising to the heavens in glory,



Figure 3 - Washington in Rotunda

<sup>96</sup> “The Apotheosis of Washington” Architect of the Capitol, Accessed Nov 22, 2018, [https://web.archive.org/web/20181122193503/https://www.aoc.gov/art/other-paintings-and-murals/apotheosis-washington?fbclid=IwAR3qiT3woaSt6\\_AGEj-lw68u8ekr7n2JuarUDcMBJj9mLdBjVFPvz63sliE](https://web.archive.org/web/20181122193503/https://www.aoc.gov/art/other-paintings-and-murals/apotheosis-washington?fbclid=IwAR3qiT3woaSt6_AGEj-lw68u8ekr7n2JuarUDcMBJj9mLdBjVFPvz63sliE). Special thanks to Prof. Grace Kao for initially bringing this image to my attention via her Nov 5 2018 Facebook post, <https://web.archive.org/web/20181122201627/https://www.facebook.com/graceviaheikao/posts/1868818643167409>

<sup>97</sup> Larry Kreitzer, “Apotheosis of the Roman Emperor,” *The Biblical Archaeologist* 53, no.4 (December 1990): 210-217.



flanked by female figures representing Liberty and Victory/Fame.” Directly below Washington is a glorification of war, “Armed Freedom and the eagle defeating Tyranny.”<sup>98</sup> Thus this image blends together both a historical individual as well as mythological representations that create a sacred story designed to draw together national values with an aura of the divine.

At this point, I would like to return to our conversation of Exclusivism. A major difference between the *Apotheosis* and the Trump image is the blatantly partisan intentions of the community that created Trump’s. On the “Make the Gospel Great Again” Facebook Page, the group derides the previous democratic administration’s failures on a range of policies, ending rhetorically by asking “Compared to the disaster of a president we had in Obama, how is [Trump] not the ‘word become flesh’ for Americans?”. Whereas the *Apotheosis* is comparatively something of an “Inclusivist”<sup>99</sup> expression of civil religion that aims to unify all of America under the myth of our first president, the Trump narrative is much more Manichean. “True” Christian America is under assault from “liberal and atheist Democrats” who are associated with a previous administration. The answer is a ‘faithful’ leader who will restore America to its right relationship with God. The website also praises other Republican figures as devout GOP “followers of the Lord”, including Mike Pence, Neil Gorsuch, and Brett Kavanaugh.<sup>100</sup> In this way the Trump photo offers a much more restrictive vision of the “chosen community” that makes up true America.

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<sup>98</sup> “The Apotheosis of Washington” *Architect of the Capital*.

<sup>99</sup> More on Inclusivism in Chapter 3 of this work.

<sup>100</sup> Make the Gospel Great Again Facebook Page, “About Us,”



These examples also demonstrate how political ideologues craft stories made of both civil and religious elements. The *Apotheosis* subtly references Christian imagery in style, while the Trump piece makes a much more blatant synergy.

It is also important to note that although both of the above pieces center on the personality of an individual, the crafting of political ideology does not necessarily require it. Take, for example, this popular meme from mid-2017, which to date has been shared over 650,000 times:<sup>101</sup>

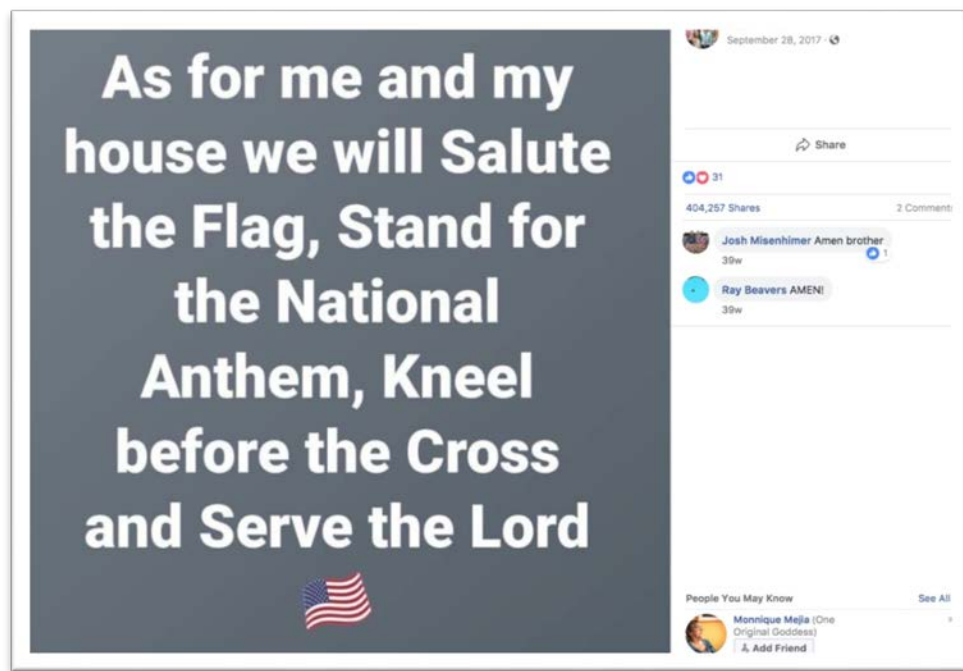


Figure 4 - Facebook Meme 1 – As for me and my house....

<sup>101</sup> God and America Forever Facebook Page, "As for me and my house" Facebook, September 28, 2017, <https://web.archive.org/web/20181105235708/https://www.facebook.com/Asformeandmyhouse/posts/2119336688317841>



The text of this meme takes a verse from the Hebrew Scriptures (Joshua 24:15 - As for me and my house we will serve the Lord) and interpolates by adding nationalist gestures, “Salute the Flag, Stand for the National Anthem” as well as a blatantly Christian phrase, “Kneel before the Cross.”

In doing so, the author is able to suggest both Political and Religious Exclusivism. Saluting the flag and standing for the national anthem are both long-time symbols of patriotism, claimed vehemently by the American Conservative movement. When the meme was created, conservatives were highly concerned with the topic of standing/saluting due to a controversy with NFL player Colin Kaepernick.<sup>102</sup> The addition of “kneeling to the cross” would not technically be necessary, as the original verse is in the Christian Scriptures. However, the author of the piece felt the need to draw additional attention to a specifically Christian message, excluding the possibility of the verse being identified with by those of Jewish background.<sup>103</sup>

This verse also is an excellent demonstration of how a particular community will construct its own self-reinforcing ‘sacred canopy’ of images. The Trump Sign noted above drew a large amount of media attention, which eventually forced its community to act defensively and take down the advertisement. This verse has gained no such exposure, allowing it to perpetuate within its community's own echo chamber for over a year. When I encountered this meme I was curious if community members would accept the altered verse. While I did not have the technology to do a full scientific investigation, I did sample approximately 500 shares and their associated comments. I could not find one instance where a comment questioned the historical

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<sup>102</sup> Josh Levin, “Colin Kaepernick’s protest cost him his job but started a movement,” *Slate*, August 18, 2017, <https://web.archive.org/web/20181126014047/https://slate.com/sports/2017/08/colin-kaepernicks-protest-cost-him-his-job-but-started-a-movement.html>



accuracy of the scriptural verse. Instead I found a near universal exclamation of “amen” alongside comments where individuals seemed to indicate that the verse was in the original Christian scriptures and/or stated their intentions to follow the directions set forth by the verse (examples below).



Figure 5 - Comments for "As for me" Meme



The above examples show that this interpolation has been accepted (and indeed embraced!) by its particular community. They have effectively created “new scriptures” which match and reinforce preconceived biases and ideas while claiming the authority of the divine. And thus they become accepted as ‘fact’ by the group. In one remark above the commenter even goes so far as to ironically accuse *other groups* of changing scriptures (“And believe the word of God no matter how they try to change it.”). These interpolations work because they *feel* right. As Berger and Luckman say, these verses reinforce internalized truth to such a degree that they are uncritically “apprehended as the reality of everyday life.”<sup>104</sup>

The third source of authoritative text utilized to construct truth by political communities are through the use of statistics and numbers to prove a particular economic or sociological “fact.” I put facts in quotes here because very often the arguments posited have a very loose association with what an academic professional in the field would consider true. Below is an excellent example, taken from running debates concerning the success of President Barack Obama:

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<sup>104</sup> Berger and Luckman, *The Social Construction of Reality*, 22.





Figure 6 - Competing Obama Memes

Both images were taken from memes posted in early 2016.<sup>105</sup> Beyond being ascetically similar they both list a large series of numbers that are designed to prove (or disprove) the success of Obama's presidency. Again, it is beyond the scope of this analysis to 'fact check' the accuracy of these line-by-line, but pertinent to our examination is that both aim to present a rational argument for why a particular politician has or has not supported the American people. But rather than offer a nuanced appraisal, both choose particular numbers that bolster a particular narrative. For example, give both images the benefit of the doubt for the moment that these numbers are not completely factious. The conservative image frames employment by "Long

<sup>105</sup> Occupy Democrats Facebook Page, "Obama Scorecard," Facebook, January 12, 2016, <https://web.archive.org/web/20181129060735/https://i2.wp.com/rationalstandard.com/wp-content/uploads/2016/01/Obama-scorecard.png?ssl=1> ; GOP and Proud Facebook Page, "This is not what a successful presidency looks Like," Facebook. March 13, 2016, <https://web.archive.org/web/20181129060858/http://ballmemes.com/i/this-is-not-what-a-successful-presidency-looks-like-president-5658388>



Term Unemployment” and “Labor Force Participation Rate.” The progressive image, in contrast works with a general “Unemployment Rate.”

Political Scientist Deborah Stone describes this rhetorical effect: “Numbers, in fact, work exactly like metaphors. To categorize in counting...is to select one feature of something, assert a likeness on the feature, and ignore all other features.”<sup>106</sup> In the same paragraph she goes on to specifically discuss unemployment as an example – “Counting ‘unemployment’ as only people who have looked for work in the last month...is to exclude unemployed people who are unable or are too discouraged to pound the pavement.” Neither of the above texts defines the meaning of their terms nor do they offer sources. Instead they treat numbers solely as rhetorical tools to bolster their own communities’ narrative.<sup>107</sup> In this way, Stone says, “Numbers become artifacts...just as poems and paintings are artifacts that people respond to, collect, recite, and display.”<sup>108</sup>

I would like to make a caveat at this point. I do not mean to say here that all statistics are meaningless. Indeed, this dissertation is predicated on the value of collecting data. Rather, I want to be very sensitive to how numbers are collected, organized, and used in research for the furthering of particular narratives. Scholar Michael Jackson makes this point in his text *The Politics of Storytelling*. Jackson notes that “For every story that sees the light of day, untold others remain in the shadows, censored or suppressed.”<sup>109</sup> This is true when using numbers as well as any other ‘artifact’ that creates a particular feeling or emotion in the audience. In both of

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<sup>106</sup> Deborah Stone, *Policy Paradox* (1988, New York: W.W. Norton and Company, 2012), 185.

<sup>107</sup> Deborah Stone, *Policy Paradox*, 185-186.

<sup>108</sup> Deborah Stone, *Policy Paradox*, 205.

<sup>109</sup> Michael Jackson, *The Politics of Storytelling: Violence, Transgression and Intersubjectivity* (Copenhagen: Tusculanum Press, 2002), 11.



the above memes, numbers are utilized to create stories that, as Jackson would say, “affirm normative boundaries.”<sup>110</sup> These draw individuals back into the domain of their own communities, and help perpetuate and reaffirm their “knowledge” of the world.

Political Exclusivism operates on just such closed circuit. Numbers are chosen that specifically legitimate the values of the community, which are seen as having their origin in both history (civil religion) as well as in some form of divine narrative (religion proper). As we will see in both chapter 3 as well as our results section, other narratives may be utilized to open up the community to new ‘facts’ and to create stories that give a much more inclusive sense of ‘truth.’

## POLITICAL EXCLUSIVISM AND ISOLATION

As we saw in chapter 1, one of the primary reactions that an Exclusivist will have when encountering the other is to withdraw. This ‘sorting’ behavior is becoming increasingly common in American society, and political and social factions seek to find ‘like-minded communities’ that share their common biases and perceptions of truth.

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There are numerous political examples of this. A recent study by the Pew Research Center found that Democrats and Republicans rarely grow close enough to members of the other party to call them friends. Less than 39% of Republicans and 31% of Democrats report having more than “a few” friends across the aisle.<sup>111</sup> The same report also found that partisans were

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<sup>110</sup> Michael Jackson, *The Politics of Storytelling: Violence, Transgression and Intersubjectivity*, 152.

<sup>111</sup> “Most Democrats, Republicans have ‘Just a Few’ or ‘No’ Friends in Opposing Party,” *Pew Research Center*, August 21, 2017, [https://web.archive.org/web/20180801045511/http://www.people-press.org/2017/10/05/8-partisan-animosity-personal-politics-views-of-trump/8\\_02/](https://web.archive.org/web/20180801045511/http://www.people-press.org/2017/10/05/8-partisan-animosity-personal-politics-views-of-trump/8_02/)



much more likely to live in neighborhoods and larger communities that favored their own political affiliations, demonstrating that these ‘tribes’ are likely geographically as well as ideologically separated.<sup>112</sup> Similarly, Political Scientist Diana Mutz, in her work *Hearing the Other Side*, found that in a comparison of citizens from twelve developed countries, Americans are the least likely to discuss politics with someone holding a different view. Less than 23% of Americans reported having even occasional conversations with those of a different political stripe.<sup>113</sup>

This isolationist tendency has been developing in America for quite some time. It is described in detail in the popular book *The Big Sort* by Bill Bishop.<sup>114</sup> Bishop argues that the nation we live in—our culture, economy, neighborhoods, and churches—have all been sculpted by the Big Sort over the past thirty years. In 1976, only about a quarter of America's voters lived in a county a presidential candidate won by a landslide margin. By 2004, it was nearly half. This is due to the fact that when a family would choose to move, 79% moved to communities that voted in similar patterns as their own.<sup>115</sup> It is also important to note that while this tendency was more pronounced for Republicans, it was demonstrated by individuals in both parties.<sup>116</sup>

A similar pattern of developing isolation can be traced through many other American institutions. For example, within American Christianity, this same period showed the decline of “Mainline Protestant” denominations, who were comparatively diverse and inclusive, with the

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<sup>112</sup> “Republicans, Democrats Differ over Ideal House Size and Community Type,” *Pew Research Center*, June 8, 2017, [https://web.archive.org/web/20180801051350/http://www.people-press.org/2017/10/05/8-partisan-animosity-personal-politics-views-of-trump/8\\_03/](https://web.archive.org/web/20180801051350/http://www.people-press.org/2017/10/05/8-partisan-animosity-personal-politics-views-of-trump/8_03/)

<sup>113</sup> Diana Mutz, *Hearing the Other Side: Deliberative Versus Participatory Democracy* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2006), 31.

<sup>114</sup> Bill Bishop, *The Big Sort: Why the Clustering of Like-Minded American is Tearing Us Apart* (New York: Houghton Mifflin Harcourt, 2008).

<sup>115</sup> Bishop, *The Big Sort: Why the Clustering of Like-Minded American is Tearing Us Apart*, 43.

<sup>116</sup> Bishop, *The Big Sort: Why the Clustering of Like-Minded American is Tearing Us Apart*, 45.



rise of Evangelical mega-churches. These mega-churches were both more likely to be highly Exclusivist theologically as well as homogenous politically and demographically. *The Big Sort* notes that “If you’re a Methodist and you move to Des Moines, Iowa, and you get to the nearest Methodist church, thirty or forty years ago you would have an open encounter. People who were pro-Bush or pro-Kerry would talk. Fertilization would go on. Now it simply doesn’t happen.”<sup>117</sup> Instead, individuals go to custom designed congregations, tailored to their own exact demographic and ascetic preferences. As Bishop notes, “[Church Venues] today are described...in terms that almost parody brand-defined, music segmented, American mall-speak.” This includes congregations incorporating “Starbucks coffee and ‘Barnes and Noble’ style bookstores” etc. if that matches the brand preferences of the local community.<sup>118</sup> The result is religious institutions of individuals who are extremely similar in race, ethnicity, class, and socioeconomic status.<sup>119</sup>

Even education, which often defines itself by its ability to develop critical thinking and to expose individuals to diversity, frequently leads to homogeneity. Diana Mutz found that individuals who went through the educational process were even less likely to have conversations with those who are of a different political stripe. This isolationism actually increases the more education one receives.<sup>120</sup> This tendency is reflected in criticisms frequently made by conservatives that the modern university “creates liberals.” Political Exclusivists have sought to control this social process by molding the educational experience into one that will create a certain political ideology. For example, conservative writer Ben Saphiro, in his

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<sup>117</sup> Bishop, *The Big Sort: Why the Clustering of Like-Minded American is Tearing Us Apart*, 173. Here Bishop is in conversation with religion scholar Martin E. Marty.

<sup>118</sup> Bishop, *The Big Sort: Why the Clustering of Like-Minded American is Tearing Us Apart*, 179-180.

<sup>119</sup> Bishop, *The Big Sort: Why the Clustering of Like-Minded American is Tearing Us Apart*, 181.

<sup>120</sup> Mutz, *Hearing the Other Side: Deliberative Versus Participatory Democracy*, 31.



*Brainwashed: How Universities Indoctrinate America's Youth*, argues that conservatives shift their financial support from "liberal colleges to conservative start-up colleges" and encourage/require their children to attend a university that meets conservative criteria.<sup>121</sup> In order to "jumpstart the market" he supports the development of an "anti-conservative bias" ranking system that serves a function similar to that of current college rankings such as U.S. News and World Report. He also strongly suggests that employers seek to hire graduates of these conservative institutions.<sup>122</sup>

As individuals 'sort' themselves into more and more homogenous groups, they are also much less likely to interact with outsiders on community projects, even when these may have benefits for both communities. Robert Putnam, in his *Bowling Alone*, laments that in American society today, individuals are much less likely to develop "the civic virtues of reciprocity and trustworthiness with those who are different from them."<sup>123</sup> Instead, he argues that Americans are much more likely to focus on developing what he calls "bonded social capital." This form of social capital "bolsters our narrow selves" and serves as "sociological superglue."<sup>124</sup> Putnam traces how over the later part of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, individuals have stopped working with groups that challenge their standpoints, instead focusing more and more on efforts that reinforce their own preexisting social identities. In doing so, they fail to develop trusting relationships with anyone who is even the slightest bit different than their own. The thought of working on a joint problem becomes unthinkable.<sup>125</sup>

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<sup>121</sup> Ben Saphiro, *Brainwashed: How Universities Indoctrinate America's Youth* (New York: Harper Collins, 2010), 44.

<sup>122</sup> Saphiro, *Brainwashed: How Universities Indoctrinate America's Youth*, 151.

<sup>123</sup> Robert Putnam, *Bowling Alone: The Collapse and Revival of American Community* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 2000), 14.

<sup>124</sup> Putnam, *Bowling Alone: The Collapse and Revival of American Community*, 21-23.

<sup>125</sup> We will return to Putnam's work in Chapter 3, especially his discussion of "Bridged vs Bonded" Social Capital and its importance for American society.



Lilliana Mason, in her recent work *Uncivil Agreement*, notes that individuals isolate themselves not only spatially, but even in the day-to-day entertainment and news habits. Over the last 20 years, the number of online and cable news sources has grown exponentially. These sources have allowed for a wide range of “niche” marketing, catered to any range of political and ideological viewpoints. As Mason writes, “Partisans are now able to protect themselves from any exposure at all to the arguments and opinions of the other side. Already geographically and culturally isolated, these citizens are also informationally-isolated.”<sup>126</sup> Even media designed for ‘relaxation’ is today segmented for audiences in ways that reinforce particular ideologies. In 2012, TiVo Research and Analytics matched viewing data with voter registration information for 186,000 households. They developed a list of the 20 most popular programs with members of each political party. Not one television program found its way into both lists.<sup>127</sup> In 2016, the New York Times found that viewership of the television show *Duck Dynasty* (a hunting show whose characters often refer to overtly Christian and Republican values) was highly predictive of a vote for Donald Trump. Household that voted for Hillary Clinton were highly correlated with watching the secular and highly improper cartoon *Family Guy*.<sup>128</sup> Watching these types of media reinforce individuals’ biases and worldviews. This is true whether it be from a program designed be informative (such as a news network or political social media site) or one that reinforces culture through caustic rants (*Duck Dynasty*) or ironic humor (*Family Guy*).

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<sup>126</sup> Lilliana Mason, *Uncivil Agreement: How Politics became our Identity* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2018), 42.

<sup>127</sup> Bill Carter, “Republicans Like Golf, Democrats Prefer Cartoons, TV Research Suggests,” *Media Decoder a New York Times Blog*, October 11, 2012, <https://web.archive.org/web/20181207062214/https://mediadecoder.blogs.nytimes.com/2012/10/11/republican-s-like-golf-democrats-prefer-cartoons-tv-research-suggests/>

<sup>128</sup> Josh Katz, “Duck Dynasty vs. Modern Family: 50 Maps of the U.S. Cultural Divide” *New York Times*, December 27, 2016, <https://web.archive.org/web/20181207064028/https://www.nytimes.com/interactive/2016/12/26/upshot/duck-dynasty-vs-modern-family-television-maps.html>



All of these forms of isolation allow for a deepening of a particular ideologies' "sacred canopy." They place individuals in a space where their own stories can remain unchallenged, and that prevents them from even encountering individuals who are of another political group. These are the exact environments that allow Political Exclusivism to thrive, and often form self-perpetuating cycles. As Exclusivists become more isolated, they have less and less to challenge their worldviews, and those who are different become more and more the Other.

## POLITICAL EXCLUSIVISM AND BIAS TOWARDS THE OTHER

In Chapter 1 we saw it is not uncommon for Exclusivists to begin to perceive those of other communities as a threat. Competing truth claims elicit strong reactions from Exclusivist communities, who see their very reality as being put in doubt by the existence of an Other. This leads to the perception of the world as involved in 'cosmic' warfare, with the competing side being Satanized. In this section we will explore how this same Exclusivist process expresses itself in the American political setting.

As I have mentioned, Political Exclusivism expresses itself very often in America through partisanship, or more broadly as hatred expressed between the two competing political ideologies commonly referred to as "liberalism" and "conservatism." Partisanship is not a recent phenomenon in American society. Scholars of partisan identity have long known that Americans are likely to negatively stereotype members of the opposite party. This has been demonstrated in polling that goes back as far as 1953.<sup>129</sup> The gap widened in the later decades of

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<sup>129</sup> Donald Green et al., *Partisan Hearts and Minds: Political Parties and the Social Identities of Voters* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2002), 14.



the 20<sup>th</sup> Century and has continued to surge since, with partisan adherents more and more likely to associate negative characteristics with members of opposing political orientations.<sup>130</sup> This affect, known to political scientists as “negative partisanship,” is today a primary feature of American politics. A Pew Research Center poll from last year found that for over 40 percent of both Democrats and Republicans, “opposition to the other party’s values” is a primary determinant of party loyalty.<sup>131</sup>

Perhaps most importantly for our discussion, these partisan differences have been shown to create deep and long lasting social identities that transcend particular issues. Lilliana Mason, in her recent work *Uncivil Agreement*, persuasively argues that in our modern political environment partisanship has created “extreme party identities that function independently of a person’s policy opinions.”<sup>132</sup><sup>133</sup>

Mason separates out two “strains” of ideology, which she calls “symbolic ideology” and “issue-based ideology.”<sup>134</sup> Her research has found that the more individuals connect on a symbolic level with a political movement (or as she states, “develop a loyalist partisan social identity”), the more likely they are to experience “high levels of anger directed towards the other

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<sup>130</sup> “Partisan Polarization Surges in Bush, Obama Years,” *Pew Research Center*, June 4, 2012, <https://web.archive.org/web/20180718214614/http://www.people-press.org/2012/06/04/section-6-religion-and-social-values/>; Lillian Mason, *Uncivil Agreement: How Politics became our Identity* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2018), 13.

<sup>131</sup> “Most who identify as Republicans and Democrats view their party connection in positive terms; partisan leaners more likely to cite negative Partisanship,” *Pew Research Center*, October 4, 2017, [https://web.archive.org/web/20180731062531/http://www.people-press.org/2017/10/05/8-partisan-animosity-personal-politics-views-of-trump/8\\_04/](https://web.archive.org/web/20180731062531/http://www.people-press.org/2017/10/05/8-partisan-animosity-personal-politics-views-of-trump/8_04/)

<sup>132</sup> Mason, *Uncivil Agreement: How Politics became our Identity*, 15.

<sup>133</sup> In many cases dislike for the opposing side is even seen as more important than the values of one’s own party. See: Alan Abramowitz and Steven Webster, “The Rise of Negative Partisanship and the Nationalization of U.S. Elections in the 21st Century,” *Electoral Studies* 41 (2016) 12-22.

<sup>134</sup> Mason, *Uncivil Agreement: How Politics became our Identity*, 20-23. Here Mason draws from research and theorizing by scholars Christopher Ellis and James Stimson in their text *Ideology in America*. Christopher Ellis and James Stimson, *Ideology in America* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2012).



party and engage in political activism against the opposing side.”<sup>135</sup> This engagement happens even in situations where individuals may feel ambivalent towards the particular issue at hand, or in cases where the party’s current actions conflict with their own personal values.<sup>136</sup> As Mason notes, “partisans are more likely to participate in politics not simply because the party holds sympathetic issue positions but also because the party is their team, is under threat, and they feel compelled to maintain its status.”<sup>137</sup> This descriptor puts Mason’s symbolic ideology very much in line with Karl Mannheim, who argues the ultimate function of any ideology is to “preserve the social status of the community adhering to the ideology.”<sup>138</sup>

“Symbolic ideology” and its resulting activism has been on full display the last several years in America. Hatred for the partisan other has evolved to include concerns about physical attacks as well as cultural ones, and fear of the opposing side often slides into the cosmic.

One of the best examples of this that I have found is this meme from mid-2017:



Figure 7 – Democrats as Threat

<sup>135</sup> Mason, *Uncivil Agreement: How Politics became our Identity*, 22.

<sup>136</sup> Mason, *Uncivil Agreement: How Politics became our Identity*, 100-101.

<sup>137</sup> Mason, *Uncivil Agreement: How Politics became our Identity*, 108.

<sup>138</sup> Mannheim, *Ideology and Utopia*, 134.



Here traditional enemies of America (ISIS, Russia and North Korea) are actually minimized as a threat. In their stead are a series of images relating to Antifa and other left-wing American activists. This argues that the U.S. is facing an internal enemy that is as grave a concern as those faced during the Cold War or the War on Terror. The “New Democratic Party” becomes a boogeyman that can destroy the very heart of America.<sup>139</sup> Partisan struggle has been raised to existential levels, and the opposing side portrayed as an agent of chaos. This fits well with the ways in which Jurgensmeyer describes Satanization, “The first step towards Satanization is the perception of the world gone awry. One takes very real problems, and raises their profile to that of the highest order of the universe....this creates an enemy one would not wish to rationalize or negotiate with.”<sup>140</sup>

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<sup>139</sup> In a similar manner, you can easily find argumentative news articles utilizing similar melodramatic language. For example: Tommy Hicks “Democrats Will Destroy America Just to Spite Trump,” *RealClearPolitics*, January 21, 2018, [https://web.archive.org/web/20180806024429/https://www.realclearpolitics.com/2018/01/21/democrats\\_will\\_destroy\\_america\\_just\\_to\\_spite\\_trump\\_432039.html](https://web.archive.org/web/20180806024429/https://www.realclearpolitics.com/2018/01/21/democrats_will_destroy_america_just_to_spite_trump_432039.html); Carol Anderson, “Why Do Republicans Hate America?” *Huffpost*, January 18, 2018, [https://web.archive.org/web/20180806025059/https://www.huffingtonpost.com/entry/opinion-anderson-republicans-america\\_us\\_5a58d5efe4b04df054f860a1](https://web.archive.org/web/20180806025059/https://www.huffingtonpost.com/entry/opinion-anderson-republicans-america_us_5a58d5efe4b04df054f860a1)

<sup>140</sup> Jurgensmeyer, *Terror in the Mind of God*, 247.



The ‘cosmic’ level of the partisan struggle can also be seen through partisan memes that call upon religious imagery. For example, see these two ‘humor’ based memes, from both sides of the political spectrum:<sup>141</sup>



Figure 8 - Jesus and Liberals

<sup>141</sup> Trump's Storm Group Facebook Page, "When Jesus Said..." Facebook, September 5, 2017 [https://web.archive.org/web/20190317022129/https://scontent-lax3-1.xx.fbcdn.net/v/t1.0-9/21272232\\_412652482464693\\_452463388121742863\\_n.jpg?nc\\_cat=111&nc\\_ht=scontent-lax3-1.xx&oh=77b5cdd1e8f9812c71286aef3a3e51ce&oe=5D209A5D](https://web.archive.org/web/20190317022129/https://scontent-lax3-1.xx.fbcdn.net/v/t1.0-9/21272232_412652482464693_452463388121742863_n.jpg?nc_cat=111&nc_ht=scontent-lax3-1.xx&oh=77b5cdd1e8f9812c71286aef3a3e51ce&oe=5D209A5D) ; Occupy Democrats Facebook Page, "Only God Can Judge Me..." Facebook, November 20, 2017 <https://web.archive.org/web/20190317021107/https://www.memesbee.com/donald-trump-memes-and-only-god-can-judge-me-only-god-can-judge/>





Figure 9 - Trump and God

Although both images are intended to use comedy as their primary rhetorical device, the comments made by those who forward and “like” the posts reflect the true purpose of the groups – to elicit prejudice and hatred against the opposing side. In the conservative meme, by far the most common message left by commenters is simply “No!” Even assuming that individuals see themselves as “just joking,” it is a blatantly hateful jest to assume that Jesus’ call for love does not extend to one’s political opponents.



Similarly, the liberal meme places the hatred in God's own mouth via use of explicative, imaging Trump being talked down to by the divine himself. Both of these are intended to cause a smile for the particular community that identifies with it, but what makes the humor work is a sort of mean-spirited judgmentalism, as well as a feeling of righteousness about their own movement's place in the cosmic universe. This too fits within the motif of Satanization. Jurgensmeyer writes that "The process of Satanization is aimed at reducing the power of one's opponents and discrediting them- belittling and humiliating them.... [In doing so] one is asserting one's own superior moral power."<sup>142</sup>

## NEGATIVE EFFECTS OF POLITICAL EXCLUSIVISM

Political Exclusivism, expressed as a partisan ideology has numerous detrimental effects for our nation. First, it allows for the development of binary thinking along liberal/conservative or Democrat/Republican lines. To make the claim that a particular ideology is 'evil' is to effectively call 50% of the American public evil.<sup>143</sup> As noted earlier in the chapter, there is less and less interaction between those who identify with these competing ideologies. Isolationism, when mixed with Satanization, allows individuals to create a "strawman" caricature of members of the opposing party.

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<sup>142</sup> Juergensmeyer, *Terror in the Mind of God*, 226.

<sup>143</sup> For comparison, even if one were to consider the 'true believers' of the opposing party "evil," a recent study by Stephen Hawkins et. al found that only 6% of conservatives and 8% of liberals could effectively be considered 'radically committed' in their movement's ideological viewpoints. The remaining 86% of the American population showed a range of viewpoints and were considerably more diverse and nuanced. Stephen Hawkins, et. al., "Hidden Tribes: A Study of America's Polarized Landscape," *More In Common*, September 1, 2018.



This type of strawman effect can lead to perceptions of the opposing side that range from merely misinformed to complete paranoia. Misperceptions and exaggerations of the opposing party are so common as to be ubiquitous in American politics. For example, a recent study by scholars Douglas Ahler and Gaurav Sood found that Americans are highly likely to exaggerate “core” traits of the opposing party. Republicans believe that 36% of Democrats are atheists/agnostics, while in actuality only 9% report being so. They also believe that 38% of Democrats are gay or lesbian, while the actual number is less than 6%. Democrats, on the other hand, exaggerate the numbers of Republicans that identity as evangelical (44% vs 34%) and the numbers of Republicans who make more than \$250,000/year (44% vs 2%).<sup>144</sup>

How the parties see each other			
Based on polling from March 2015			
HOW MANY DEMOCRATS ARE ...	ACTUAL SHARE	ESTIMATED BY REPUBLICANS	DIFFERENCE
Agnostics or atheists	9%	36%	+27
Black	24	46	+22
LGB	6	38	+32
Union members	11	44	+33
HOW MANY REPUBLICANS ARE ...	ACTUAL SHARE	ESTIMATED BY DEMOCRATS	DIFFERENCE
65 or older	21%	44%	+23
Evangelicals	34	44	+10
Southerners	36	44	+8
Earning \$250K or more a year	2	44	+42

Ahler and Sood confirmed the 44 percent across Republican categories estimated by Democrats.

SOURCE: ASHER AND SOOD

Figure 10 - Partisan Views of Other

<sup>144</sup> Douglas Ahler and Gaurav Sood, "The Parties in Our Heads: Misperceptions about Party Composition and Their Consequences," *The Journal of Politics* 80, no. 3 (August 2017): 964-981. Chart taken from: <https://web.archive.org/web/20180726161429/https://fivethirtyeight.com/features/democrats-are-wrong-about-republicans-republicans-are-wrong-about-democrats/>.



However, these misperceptions can also lead to paranoia. For example, during the 2016 presidential election a conservative conspiracy developed on social media which argued that John Podesta, Hillary Clinton, and others in the Democratic Party were secretly involved in organized pedophilia, child trafficking, and even “Satanic ritual abuse.”<sup>145</sup> The narrative evolved on right wing media sites, similar to the kinds I have quoted in this chapter. This theory so convinced conservative followers that in December of 2016 a believer by the name of Edgar Maddison Welch entered a Pizza Parlor in Washington, D.C. with an assault rifle, believing it to be a Democrat sex-trafficking base of operations. Mr. Welch was acting on ‘tips’ taken from his site. He reported to police that he truly believed Hillary Clinton was keeping children there, and saw himself as the hero of the story.<sup>146</sup> Thankfully in this instance no one was harmed, but the example serves to show that highly distorted narratives can come to be accepted as true by Exclusivist believers. It also is a rather direct example of Jurgensmeyers’s Satanization, as Mr. Welch rather literally believed that members of the Democratic Party worshiped Satan.

Second, it can allow formal institutions, such as political parties, to function with minimal public oversight. Political scientists Alan Abramowitz and Steven Webster have found that in recent years the number of individuals who participate in “straight ticket voting” has increased dramatically, as has the likelihood that individuals will vote exclusively along party lines for Presidential, Congressional/Senate, and even local elections.<sup>147</sup> This results in many

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<sup>145</sup> Kate Samuelson, “What to Know About Pizzagate, the Fake News Story With Real Consequences,” *Time*, December 5, 2016, <https://web.archive.org/save/http://time.com/4590255/pizzagate-fake-news-what-to-know/>

<sup>146</sup> Craig Silverman, “How the Bizarre Conspiracy Theory Behind ‘Pizzagate’ was Spread,” *Buzzfeed News*, December 5, 2016, <https://web.archive.org/save/https://www.buzzfeed.com/craigsilverman/fever-swamp-election>

<sup>147</sup> Alan Ambramowitz and Steven Webster, “The Rise of Negative Partisanship and the Nationalization of U.S. Elections in the 21st Century,” 20.



individuals coming to public office without serious public vetting, and puts more power in the hands of the institutions themselves to select candidates. It also explains, Mason notes, why many Republicans continue to support individuals such as Donald Trump despite his continuing to take unpopular policy positions and his numerous personal scandals.<sup>148</sup> Once an individual is “one of us” there is an inborn desire to support them even when you disagree with many of their propositions and decisions. This again releases officials (and parties) from accountability for their actions.

Third, and perhaps most dangerous, is the possibility that individuals who have Satanized the Other come into political power themselves. Here we see Political Exclusivism at its worst. The full powers of the state may be brought to bear by political elites leading to persecution and, in the worst cases, genocide. In the same way that Exclusivist communities will police their members seeking to sustain a single conception of reality, so too will governments but on a much larger scale.

Political philosopher Hannah Arendt calls such action on the part of a government “totalitarian discourse.” Totalitarianism, Arendt writes, “aims for the uniformity of total sameness, for complete harmony and commonality, thus setting its face against the existential and ontological fact of plurality.” Totalitarians reject pluralism because “a plurality...*ipso facto* refutes every contention that any specific form of government is absolutely valid.” They thus limit and retell public narrative in such a manner that promotes hegemonic unity, even if to do so they must “establish a fictitious world” where their discourse filters out alternative voices.<sup>149</sup>

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<sup>148</sup> Mason, *Uncivil Agreement: How Politics became our Identity*, 133.

<sup>149</sup> Hannah Arendt, *The Origins of Totalitarianism* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Harcourt, 1973), 391.



Totalitarianism leads to a society that accepts the dehumanization of the other as an everyday occurrence. Arendtian scholar John McGowan notes, “To eschew world domination, to live at peace with other nations, to declare the revolution over would be to accept (at least implicitly) that this fictitious world created here is not *the* world, but only one world among others. The totalitarian drive to create just one world is endless and justifies constant turmoil.”<sup>150</sup> This drive includes both taking warlike actions against one's neighbors, as well as persecution and dehumanization of one's own citizens when they refuse to follow the party line.<sup>151</sup>

Worse, if the state is successful, large bodies of the populace may come to believe the ‘truth’ promoted by the state. In this case the population will have effectively internalized a new social reality. In 1965 Arendt did an analysis of Nazi officers who served under Hitler during the Second World War, most notably Adolf Eichmann. Arendt notes the genocide that was carried out was not executed by fanatics or sociopaths, but by ordinary people who accepted the premises of their state and therefore participated with the view that their actions were normal. She comes to call this “The banality of evil.”<sup>152</sup>

This state of affairs is very similar to communities that have fully embraced Satanization. According to Mark Jurgensmeyer, those who have internalized an enemy as Satan, see them as a “subhuman species.” This allows the group to “commit atrocities without a second thought.”<sup>153</sup>

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<sup>150</sup>John McGowan, “Must Politics be Violent? Arendt’s Utopian Vision” in *Hannah Arendt and the Meaning of Politics*, eds. Craig Calhoun and John McGowan (Minneapolis: Regents of the University of Minnesota, 1997), 266-267.

Hannah Arendt, “Total Domination,” in *The Portable Hannah Arendt*, ed. Peter Baehr (New York: Penguin Putman, Inc., 2000), 135-140.

<sup>152</sup> Hannah Arendt, “Eichmann in Jerusalem: A Report on the Banality of Evil” in *The Portable Hannah Arendt*, ed. Peter Baehr (New York: Penguin Putman, Inc., 2000), 365.

<sup>153</sup>Jurgensmeyer, *Terror in the Mind of God*, 226.



In the next chapter, we will turn and explore two frameworks that work to counter the pull of Exclusivism – that of Inclusivism and Pluralism.



## **Chapter 3: Inclusivism and Pluralism in Theory and Practice**

Our discussion will now turn to address the alternative frameworks to Exclusivism. Theologian of Religions Alan Race, who we first referenced in Chapter 1, created three models of interfaith relations. Exclusivism was first, with the others being Inclusivism and Pluralism.

Inclusivism is in many ways the ‘moderate’ position in Race’s typology. Like exclusivism, it still takes ‘truth’ as a singular entity, and in the final analysis always returns to the viewpoint of the home community. However, unlike Exclusivism, the Other is not primarily seen as a threat. Instead, this viewpoint endorses an “ethic of tolerance” that allows for association with alternate communities, if on a limited basis. However, the Other is still perceived as at least somewhat ‘in error’ in respect to their perception of truth.

Pluralism takes diversity the most seriously of the three categories. It sees truth as something that is multi-faceted, and is open to multiple pathways to full human flourishing. This allows for a much deeper and nuanced understanding of the Other, as their truth claims are taken seriously as a legitimate alternate possibility for transcendence. This ultimately allows for the easiest creation of a deeper sense of friendship and community.



## INCLUSIVISM IN THE THEOLOGY OF RELIGIONS

The first alternate model I will consider is what Race calls the “Inclusivist” model. Like Exclusionists, Inclusivists still assume their own tradition to be “supreme among religions.”<sup>154</sup> The difference is that whereas Exclusionists claim their tradition is the ‘only’ source of transcendence, Inclusivists soften this language to say merely that their tradition is the “most complete of the religious choices” in respect to understanding the divine.<sup>155</sup>

Theologically, this framework can be further subdivided according to soteriology. At the conservative end of Inclusivism is a model that theologian Paul Knitter calls “Partial Replacement.” These individuals do believe that there is some form of “general revelation” that is made manifest “in and through other religions.”<sup>156</sup> Inclusivists are willing to acknowledge that there is some degree of “authentic presence” in the beliefs and practices of other traditions. This may be expressed mystically, as in the Lutheran theology of Paul Althaus who argued that individuals hear the Divine in the “Something More” that pulls at their hearts when they fall in love or express commitment to another individual, or when they “answer to a sense of social responsibility for their fellow men.”<sup>157</sup> Similarly, theologian Paul Tillich expresses a type of Inclusivism when he describes his concept of “Ultimate Concern” – Tillich argues that all individuals feel a presence of God that grounds and centers their being. This concern “qualifies all other concerns as preliminary and...contains to the answer to the question of the meaning of life.”<sup>158</sup> This expresses itself as a feeling of acceptance. Even if an individual is unsure of the

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<sup>154</sup> Race, *Christians and Religious Pluralism: Patterns in the Christian Theology of Religions*, 30.

<sup>155</sup> Race, *Christians and Religious Pluralism: Patterns in the Christian Theology of Religions*, 20.

<sup>156</sup> Knitter, *Theologies of Religions*, 32.

<sup>157</sup> Paul Althaus, *Christian Truth: Textbook of Dogmatics* (1969, Lebanon: Franklin Classic Books, 2018), 16.

<sup>158</sup> Paul Tillich, *Christianity and the Encounter of World Religions* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1963), 4.



source of this acceptance, he argues that one ought to “just accept Acceptance” and allow themselves to be held by the hands of God.<sup>159</sup>

Thus, in respect to truth Inclusivist theologies hold that individuals have access to transcendence at an intuitive level, even if they are unaware of what it is they are sensing. This allows for a much greater possibility of mutual action, as individuals may be ‘led’ to the same place even despite their own mistaken beliefs. It is important to note here, however, that in the end-game ‘general revelation’ is not sufficient for ultimate salvation/transcendence. As Paul Knitter says, “this broad access to truth does not replace the ontological necessity for one’s own tradition.”<sup>160</sup> Hence, the name “Partial Replacement.” Individuals can ‘keep’ their ethical mores, but they must still in the end convert.

This style of inclusive framework is also found in many early Buddhist texts, most notably the often-read *Mahāparinibbāṇa Sutta*. This well known text recites the Buddha’s final words before death and leaves instructions for his followers once he is gone. In it, a follower named Sunhadda asks the Buddha what he thinks regarding various religious teachers of other traditions, and asks as to their degree of ‘special insight.’ The Buddha replies that “in whatever doctrine and discipline, dear Subhadda, the noble eightfold path [of Buddhism] is found, there is found liberation also....”<sup>161</sup>

However, the Buddha goes on to say further that not all teachings of these masters reflect the Buddhist path, “Now only in this [Buddhist] doctrine and discipline, Subhadda, is the complete noble eightfold path found, and here alone...the systems of others are empty with

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<sup>159</sup> Paul Tillich, *The Courage to Be* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1952). 20.

<sup>160</sup> Knitter, *Theologies of Religions*, 33.

<sup>161</sup> *Mahāparinibbāṇa Sutta*, Chapter 5, 27-28, available in *The Digha Nikāya*, vol. II eds. Rhys Davids and J. Estlin Carpenter (1903, London: Oxford University Press, 1987), 151.



respect to perfect knowledge.” This teaching thus argues that although aspects of truth can be found in other traditions, none contain the full truth as the Buddha taught it. As Buddhist scholar Kristin Beise Kiblinger notes, “other systems of thought...are inferior, but not absolutely void. The text here still leaves room for lower level value in other traditions, as long as one does not depend upon them for Arhatship (Buddhist Enlightenment).”<sup>162</sup>

A more broad sense of Inclusivism is exemplified in Knitter’s “Fulfillment” model. These theologians take the concept of general revelation a step further to argue that members of traditions who are devout and act in an ethical manner touch the ‘true’ revelation to such a degree that they can ‘be saved.’ The classic example of this type of theology comes from Catholic theologian Karl Rahner, who argued that devout members of other traditions “embodied” God’s grace, and thus became “Anonymous Christians.”

"Anonymous Christianity" means that a person lives in the grace of God and attains salvation outside of explicitly constituted Christianity. A Protestant Christian is, of course, "no anonymous Christian"; that is perfectly clear. But, let us say, a Buddhist monk (or anyone else I might suppose) who, because he follows his conscience, attains salvation and lives in the grace of God; of him I must say that he is an anonymous Christian; if not, I would have to presuppose that there is a genuine path to salvation that really attains that goal, but that simply has nothing to do with Jesus Christ. But I cannot do that. And so if I hold if everyone depends upon Jesus Christ for salvation, and if at the same time I hold that many live in the world who have not expressly recognized Jesus Christ, then there remains in my opinion nothing else but to take up this postulate of an anonymous Christianity.<sup>163</sup>

Rahner even goes so far as to claim that a person could "intellectually profess *disbelief* but [be] existentially ... committed to those values which for the Christian are concretized in

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<sup>162</sup> Kristin Beise Kiblinger, *Buddhist Inclusivism: Attitudes Towards Religious Others* (London: Routledge, 2005), 33.

<sup>163</sup> Karl Rahner, *Karl Rahner in Dialogue: Conversations and Interviews, 1965–1982* (New York: Crossroads, 1986), 131.



God."<sup>164</sup> His theology moves the question of salvation/transcendence fully away from a necessity on correct doctrine or confessional belief, and instead focuses on broader “existential commitments” that still allow one to claim participation in the Ultimate.

In practice, this theology takes the ‘tolerance’ of the opposing viewpoint a step further, essentially allowing them full access to the divine. The quirk, however, is that one still holds on to one’s own conception of truth as the final endpoint. In encountering the other tradition, this may still cause conflict, the Inclusivist ultimately believes that “persons walking along other religious paths do not really know where they are going; they don’t really know who they are.”<sup>165</sup>

Subtle nuances of the encountered tradition are in danger of being either a) misinterpreted or b) ignored completely because the Inclusivist is unable to truly step outside of their own viewpoint. This can lead to the breakdown of relationship. Author Marc Gopin notes that by working only from one’s own faith system, one is “missing the cues of how the alienated other is trying to engage us.” This alienation “perpetuates conflict...as needs are ignored, gestures remain unreciprocated, and opportunities for new engagement lost.”<sup>166</sup> That being said, compared to the Exclusivist models Inclusivist theologies are much less likely to act with overt violence towards members of the opposite faiths. Their own religious system has found a way to incorporate them, making them ‘non-threatening.’

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<sup>164</sup> Rahner, *Karl Rahner in Dialogue: Conversations and Interviews, 1965–1982*, 51.

<sup>165</sup> Paul Knitter. *Theologies of Religions*, 74.

<sup>166</sup> Marc Gopin, “The Use of the Word and its Limits” in *Interfaith Dialogue and Peacebuilding*, ed. David Smock (Washington: United States Institute for Peace, 2002), 36.



## PLURALISM IN THE THEOLOGY OF RELIGIONS

The third of Race's typological categories is that of Pluralism, the belief that your tradition is "one of a possible number of sources of transcendent transformation."<sup>167</sup> He holds that this viewpoint "assumes that Hinduism, Islam, Buddhism, Sikhism and so on exist in 'rough parity' with the Christian faith as streams of authentic religious belief and practice."<sup>168</sup>

This "rough parity" can be expressed in many different ways, utilizing multiple theological and metaphysical frameworks. For example, one common method is through what Paul Knitter describes as the "religious mystical bridge." The assumption here is that "the Divine is both more than anything experienced by any one religion and yet in some way present in the mystical experiences of all of them."<sup>169</sup> Two excellent examples of this type of thinking come from Swami Vivekananda, a popular 19<sup>th</sup> Century Hindu guru and ambassador to the West during the first Parliament of the World's Religions in 1893, and from the Perennial Philosophy of Aldous Huxley, who was highly influenced by Vivekananda.

Vivekananda argues for a "universal religion" that is expressed "in different languages and in different ways" by all of the traditions on Earth. To express his belief, he compares the world's religions to a great circle. He notes that, "The further we go away from the center, all these religions become more and more distant from each other. This is the case with the ceremonial and mythical parts of the various religions of the world. But when we approach the

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<sup>167</sup> Race, *Making Sense of Religious Pluralism: Shaping Theology of Religions for Our Times*, 20.

<sup>168</sup> Race, *Thinking about Religious Pluralism: Shaping Theology of Religions for Our Times*, 34. Race takes the phrase 'rough parity' from Langdon Gilkey, "Plurality and Its Theological Implications," in *The Myth of Christian Uniqueness: Towards a Pluralistic Theology of Religions*, eds. John Hick and Paul Knitter (Maryknoll: Orbis Books, 1987), 37.

<sup>169</sup> Knitter. *Theologies of Religions*, 113.



center, we see them all converging to a unity.”<sup>170</sup> This unity is grasped through one’s sincere search for apprehension of divinity (as he says, “in the realization of God”)<sup>171</sup>, and that religious path may be furthered through any of the world’s traditions. He notes that, “The important thing is to reach the roof, you can reach it by the stone stairs or by bamboo steps or by a rope.”<sup>172</sup> At the same time, his viewpoint allows him to also value the unique differences in the path of each tradition. This leads him to posit a utopic vision wherein all of the world’s traditions continue to thrive, while also realizing the deeper union that surpasses them all:

“If there is ever to be a universal religion, it must be one which will have no location in place or time, which will be infinite like the God it will preach, and whose sun will shine upon the followers of Krishna and of Christ, on saints and sinners alike, which will not be Brahminic or Buddhist, Christian or Mohammedan, but the sum total of all and still have infinite space for development...As different rivers originate from different sources but mingle in the ocean, losing their names and forms, so all the various religious paths that human beings take, through different tendencies, lead to God, or the truth...”<sup>173</sup>

Aldous Huxley similarly explores a path that seeks to transcend the world’s different religions. In his *Perennial Philosophy* he encapsulates this belief with a set of principles described as “the philosophy of the mystics.” These include the position that behind all religions there is a “divine Ground of all existence [that] is a spiritual Absolute, ineffable in terms of discursive thought, but (in certain circumstances) susceptible of being directly experienced and

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<sup>170</sup> Swami Vivekananda, *The Complete Works of Swami Vivekananda, Vol II* (Seattle: Amazon Digital Services, LLC, 2013), Location 1423, Kindle.

<sup>171</sup> Swami Vivekananda, *The Complete Works of Swami Vivekananda, Vol III* (Seattle: Amazon Digital Services, LLC, 2013), Location 6740, Kindle.

<sup>172</sup> Vivekananda, *The Complete Works of Swami Vivekananda, Vol III*, Location 590.

<sup>173</sup> Vivekananda, *The Complete Works of Swami Vivekananda, Vol II*, Location 3627. While it is beyond the scope of this paper to give a full account of Vivekananda’s beliefs, it should be noted that he himself is a follower of “Advaita Vedanta,” or the non-dualism school of Hindu philosophy. For an excellent overview of his beliefs and their relationship to his pluralism, see Arvind Sharma, “Universal Religion in the Life and Thought of Swami Vivekānanda” in *The Concept of Universal Religion in Modern Hindu Thought*, ed. Arvind Sharma (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 1998), 54-72.



realized by the human being.”<sup>174</sup> This Ground is at its core a mystery, and beyond everyday linguistic comprehension. However, through a “life of contemplation....the direct and intuitive awareness of God...may be realized.”<sup>175</sup> Here Huxley’s text draws upon a wide array of mystics, prophets, and saints including Jesus, the Buddha, Mohammed, Rumi, St. John of the Cross, William Law, Shankara, as well as quotes from Upanishads and the Bhagavad-Gita. All of these figures, he argues, have walked mystical paths that allow them to “surpass the limitations of ego” and “become identified with the Ground.”<sup>176</sup> Thus, for Huxley, behind any tradition is a set of common truths, virtues, and practices which allow for spiritual growth and transcendence.

Other Pluralists utilize what Paul Knitter calls “the Philosophical-Historical Bridge.” These theorists work to create a philosophical postulate that argues for “a Divine Reality behind and within all historical religions.”<sup>177</sup> One of the most influential of these is John Hick. Hick argues for what he calls “Copernican revolution in theology” based on our growing knowledge of the extreme variety of traditions that exist in the world:

“[This Copernican revolution] demands a paradigm shift from a Christianity-centered or Jesus-centered to a God-centered model of the universe of faiths. One then sees the great world religions as different human responses to the one divine Reality, embodying different perceptions which have been formed in different historical and cultural circumstances.”<sup>178</sup>

This divine reality comes to be called “the Real” by Hick. Hick here builds upon a Kantian framework, utilizing Immanuel Kant’s distinction between *noumenon* and *phenomenon*.<sup>179</sup> The Real (be it described as God, Buddha-nature, Brahman etc.) is unavailable

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<sup>174</sup> Aldous Huxley, *The Perennial Philosophy* (1945, New York: Harper Books, 2009), 15.

<sup>175</sup> Huxley, *The Perennial Philosophy*, 97.

<sup>176</sup> Huxley, *The Perennial Philosophy*, 24.

<sup>177</sup> Knitter, *Theologies of Religions*, 112.

<sup>178</sup> John Hick, *God and the Universe of Faiths* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1973), 131; quoted in Knitter, *Theologies of Religions*, 114.

<sup>179</sup> For more on Kant’s theories of the *noumenon* and *phenomenon* see Immanuel Kant, *The Critique of Pure Reason*, trans, John Meiklejohn (1781, San Francisco: Pacific Publishing, 2001), chapter 3. Also, see Alan Wood’s



to be understood by humans as a “thing-in-itself.” However, we do have access to historically-situated phenomena.<sup>180</sup> These phenomena are “different ways of experiencing, conceiving, and living in relation to an ultimate divine reality which transcends our varied versions of it.”<sup>181</sup> No phenomenological account can truly describe the Real. However, the Real lies behind all religious experiences as the final ontological referent.<sup>182</sup>

John Cobb offers a counter-proposal to Hick’s hypothesis of a single ultimate referent lying behind all religious phenomena. As Cobb notes, “...it is unilluminating to say that God who is worshipped, and Emptiness, which is realized, are two names for the same *noumenal* reality.”<sup>183</sup> Noting the incredible diversity of conceptions of the divine, he suggests that it makes more sense if there were to be a “plurality of ultimate realities.” These include ultimate reality as personal deity (or God), a creative impulse that is impersonal in nature, and the cosmos itself understood as “the totality of finite things.”<sup>184</sup> Cobb argues that this division allows for the reconciliation of conflicting claims of different religious systems through an understanding that they are actually seeking “the answers to different questions regarding different ultimates.”<sup>185</sup>

As we close this section, it should be noted that for the purposes of this dissertation, either of the above ‘bridges’ are acceptable. In many ways, the specific metaphysical claims are

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introduction to the topic in Immanuel Kant, “Critique of Pure Reason,” in *Basic Writings of Kant*, ed. Allen W. Wood (New York: Random House, 2001), 5-13.

<sup>180</sup> John Hick, *An Interpretation of Religion* (1989, New Haven: Yale University Press, 2004), 242-243.

<sup>181</sup> John Hick, *An Interpretation of Religion*, 235.

<sup>182</sup> Hick, *An Interpretation of Religion*, 246.

<sup>183</sup> John Cobb, *Beyond Dialogue: Toward a Mutual Transformation of Christianity and Buddhism* (Eugene: Wipf and Stock Publishers, 1982), 43.

<sup>184</sup> John Cobb, *Transforming Christianity and the World* (Maryknoll: Orbis Books, 1999), 185; See also, David Ray Griffin, “John Cobbs’s Whiteheadian Complementary Pluralism,” in *Deep Religious Pluralism*, ed. David Ray Griffin (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 2005), 48-49.

<sup>185</sup> Cobb, *Transforming Christianity and the World*, 136-137, 185; Griffin, “John Cobbs’s Whiteheadian Complementary Pluralism,” 49.



less important than the core understanding of truth as in some way multiple. As Martin E. Marty says in his text *When Faiths Collide*, “those who are struggling for pluralism...cannot wait for answers that are finally satisfying to the philosopher.” What matters is that they strive to understand the other’s system of truth, practicing what Marty calls, “counter-intolerance and hospitality.”<sup>186</sup> Pluralism will continue to be discussed in the following sections, and this chapter will close with a summary of the core characteristics of both Pluralism and Inclusivism.

## INCLUSIVISM AND PLURALISM IN POLITICS

Our discussion now turns to what Inclusivism and Pluralism look like when transposed into politics.

As we discussed earlier in the chapter, Inclusivism still understand truth as a path that ultimately leads back to their own value system. In the final calculation, there is one “correct” road that leads to the Good. However, this does not mean that the Other’s viewpoints constitute a threat as they do for Exclusivists. Rather they are treated as being in a comparatively innocent form of error. This “innocent error” can be conceived of in two ways. First, it represents a reinterpretation of the Other as a mildly confused version of one’s self. By interpreting the other group’s actions as unconsciously taking the correct path, it assumes a universality of human nature that centers on one’s own experiences and biases. This correlates with a “Fulfillment”

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<sup>186</sup> Martin Marty, *When Faiths Collide* (Hoboken: Blackwell Publishing), 148. It should be noted that Marty himself is strongly skeptical of the possibility of ‘deep pluralism.’ In the following sections we will explore his counter-proposal, that of “associations.” However, his point here is still relevant in that he argues against individuals becoming so caught up in a particular “pluralist philosophy” that they end up treating it in a doctrinaire exclusivist manner. If the overall project of Pluralism is to recognize multiple truths, then it is very much in that spirit to accept competing viewpoints within the Pluralist family. For more, see Marty, *When Faiths Collide*, 67-97.



model theologically. A political Inclusivist is going to see the actions of another individual or group and accept them, believing them to be “the right thing” even if they are acting on superstitious beliefs.

The second, ‘weaker’ form of this Inclusivism correlates with Knitter’s “partial replacement” theologies. Here, individuals are seen as having some, but not all of the same ties to ultimate truth. Where there is agreement, there can be tolerance and the possibility of acting jointly. However, it is accepted that the Other does seek fundamentally different ends, and this means that the Inclusivist will ultimately reach a breaking point where paths must separate.

The latter form of cooperation follows the style of interaction described by Martin E. Marty in his text *The One and the Many*. Marty argues for the development of “associations,” a term he borrows from Alexis de Tocqueville. For Tocqueville, associations were essential to American civil society. He wrote in 1835 that for America, “the science of association is the mother science; the progress of all the others depends on the progress of that one.”<sup>187</sup> Associations were a means for providing social power through coalitions of citizens, particularly those of minority groups. He writes in *Democracy in America* that, “At the present time the liberty of association has become a necessary guarantee against the tyranny of the majority...” By joining together, people of limited social power can resist majorities that might want to limit

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<sup>187</sup> Alexis de Tocqueville, *Democracy in America* (1835, Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 2000), 492. Much of Tocqueville’s discussion of associations focuses on how and why they develop in democracies instead of in aristocratic states. He argues that American democracy both encourages the natural development of associations, and that it is highly important for it to retain a central place in American civil life. For more information on this topic see: Oliver Zung, “Alexis De Tocqueville on Associations and Philanthropy,” *HistPhil* 124 (July 13, 2015) <https://web.archive.org/web/20181223051639/https://histphil.org/2015/07/13/alexis-de-tocqueville-on-associations-and-philanthropy/>; Alexis de Tocqueville, *Democracy in America*, 489-492.



their liberties. Similarly, he also argued that the formation of associations could act as a check-and balance against “the tyranny...of a small faction or a single individual.”<sup>188</sup>

Tocqueville, however, gave relatively few details about what associations might look like. This is one of Marty’s goals in *The One and the Many*. Marty is clear that “Association implies an entity that is looser than a true community...a company of strangers who share common purposes but who do not necessarily share all elements of life with these others.”<sup>189</sup> He is highly skeptical of the possibility of a true civil “community.” Rather he posits that individuals associate when their interests coincide, even when historical/class/race differences keep them from developing close relationships. As such, joint actions are largely limited to the implementation of policies that where both groups see some common goal. These groups are expected to be constantly forming and dissolving as interests change.<sup>190</sup> Thus politically, most arguments that center on “mutual self-interest” I label as Inclusivist in this more ‘restricted’ sense. There is no requirement for deep understanding or friendship, as long as groups tolerate one another insofar as their values are in alignment.

In comparison to Exclusivism this makes this ideological viewpoint much less likely to engage in outright isolationism. It presumes that there are benefits to be had from active engagement with the Other. However, these interactions suffer from one of two types of relational barrier. In the more narrow Inclusivist model, the Other can still be something of a

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<sup>188</sup> Tocqueville, *Democracy in America*, 194.

<sup>189</sup> Martin Marty, *The One and the Many, America’s Struggle for the Common Good* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1997). As an aside, Marty’s concept of associations may be seen as a critique of Eboo Patel mentioned later in this dissertation, although he does not address Patel directly in his argument. Marty’s vision is of groups working together for particular ends, but who avoid common identification. He is very worried that superordinate identities “crystalize,” becoming “thick, resistant to impulses, and no longer capable of receiving positive influences from new groups.” At this point they become coercive, and more in line with totalitarian thinking than voluntary associations (Marty, *The One and the Many, America’s Struggle for the Common Good*, 122-130).

<sup>190</sup> Marty, *The One and the Many, America’s Struggle for the Common Good*, 214.



hazard, in that they are still prone to ‘errors’ and their viewpoints should be taken with a grain of salt. In the broader view of Inclusivism this is less of an issue. However the Inclusivist party still suffers from a sense of arrogance in regard to the Other, in that their way of understanding is through appropriation. Just as no self-respecting Muslim or Buddhist would like to be called an “Anonymous Christian,” there will be an almost guaranteed prickliness if a political progressive tells as conservative “you are secretly a liberal, I know it!” Thus, although Inclusivism does not entirely preclude the possibility of deep relationships, its ego-centered approach to relationship building creates difficulties, even in its weaker form.

Pluralism has a very different attitude towards reality. Whereas Inclusivism still ultimately needs there to be one centering meta-narrative, the Pluralist notion leaves open the possibility for multiple fully legitimate understandings of big-T Truth. This broader conception of the Ultimate allows for a much deeper relationship to develop, one where individuals accept the Other *as* the Other.

This style of engagement reflects the political philosophy of theorists such as Hanna Arendt. For Arendt, encountering the Other on their own terms is a central feature of democracy. She argues for the use of a relational process she variously described as “representative thinking,” “thinking with an enlarged mentality” and most famously “training the imagination to go visiting.”<sup>191</sup>

In this method, participants are encouraged to “engage in a thought experiment” wherein “one thinks successively via an act of imagination from the standpoints of various differently

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<sup>191</sup> Nancy Frasier. “Communication, Transformation, and Consciousness-Raising” in *Hanna Arendt and the Meaning of Politics* eds. Craig Calhoun and John McGowan (Minneapolis: Regents of the University of Minnesota, 1997), 170.



situated other people.”<sup>192</sup> The result of this “visiting” is an “enlarged mentality” that enables one to both identify with and feel a kinship to all members of the plurality. This kinship, described as solidarity, allows one to “establish deliberately and, as it were, dispassionately a community of interest with the oppressed and exploited...for solidarity...is able to comprehend a multitude conceptually, not only the multitude of a class or nation or a people, but eventually all of mankind.”<sup>193</sup>

Arendt argues that Visiting is necessary for the stability of a nation. She notes that a nation “must derive stability from plurality...difference yields stability, whereas attempts to achieve ‘harmony’ yield only terror and instability.”<sup>194</sup> As noted in the last chapter, Arendt was very concerned with the conservative instinct to reduce politics to one single narrative. She believed that the ability to take on other perspectives was essential to the process of democratic decision making, and allowed for the facilitation of compromise and mutual understanding.

This style of communicating also reflects processes suggested by Karl Mannheim. One of the problems for Mannheim was how to stand sufficiently outside one’s conditioning to recognize ideologies and utopias for what they were rather than accepting them as accurate descriptions of the world. In order to do so, one must “escape their social origins” and become capable of “free-floating” or “unattached” analysis of all ideologies that make up a particular social location.<sup>195</sup> To use Martin E. Marty’s terms, Arendt’s method posits that there is a

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<sup>192</sup> Frasier, “Communication, Transformation, and Consciousness-Raising,” 170-171.

<sup>193</sup> Hannah Arendt, “The Social Question,” in *The Portable Hannah Arendt*, ed. Baehr, Peter (New York: Penguin Putman, Inc., 2000), 267.

<sup>194</sup> Hannah Arendt, “The Social Question,” 270. See also, John McGowen, “Must Politics be Violent? Arendt’s Utopian Vision” in *Hanna Arendt and the Meaning of Politics*, eds. Craig Calhoun and John McGowan (Minneapolis: Regents of the University of Minnesota, 1997), 266-267.

<sup>195</sup> As an aside, it should be noted that Mannheim and Arendt did differ dramatically on how to generate “visiting.” Arendt conceived of it as a broad part of the civic process, which comes as a result of active engagement with one’s political rivals, as well as through the process of public education. Mannheim saw this happening primarily



possibility of moving from mere ‘association’ between groups to an understanding of the nation as a true community. This is fundamentally a different form of political Utopia.

This ability to understand and to validate the beliefs of the Other allows Pluralist belief the easiest path towards developing close relationships based on respect. As we will see in the later chapters of this work, individuals who held Pluralist beliefs displayed the strongest relationships with others across political and ideological divides. For more on this see Chapter 6.

## PLURALISM AND INCLUSIVISM IN ACTION – LESSONS FROM INTERFAITH DIALOGUE AND INTERRELIGIOUS STUDIES

Our discussion now turns towards practices that are designed to encourage positive relationships between communities. The techniques mentioned here were developed as methods to encourage positive community building between participants of different religions. As we will see in the following chapters, these same techniques ‘transfer’ very well to those involved in political interchanges, as the same themes were evident in the stories provided by my survey participants. They will all be influential in my suggested best practices for American political dialogue.

I will focus primarily on three techniques:

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through social mobility, where individuals move into different class spectrums themselves and are thus able to ‘live out’ the ideology of another group. This was a viewpoint that Arendt detested. For more on their competing viewpoints see: Jayne Fagnoli, “Sociology and the Mistrust of Thought: Hannah Arendt’s Encounter with Karl Mannheim and the Sociology of Knowledge” (Masters Thesis, Bard College, 2013); Peter Baehr, “The Problem of ‘Unmasking’ in *Ideology and Utopia*: Karl Mannheim, Karl Jaspers and Hannah Arendt,” (Presentation Paper, American Sociological Association in Las Vegas Nevada, August 2011).



The first is the practice of *empathetic dialogue*, which in practice bears strong resemblance to Ardentian visiting. Practitioners first strive to understand the viewpoints of the Other in all of their nuance. This begins with a certain amount of base education about the beliefs and practices of the other group. However, this is only the first step in a true dialogue.

Paul Knitter notes how hard it can be to find commonality when this process begins. He writes, “we have to search for a new language, new ways of speaking that will respect and not denigrate our differences, and at the same time somehow bridge them.”<sup>196</sup> This ‘language making’ is a commonly stated first step. Mohammed Abu-Nimer labels the practice as the establishment of “secondary or universal peace languages” as an initial step in the dialogue. The use of “primary language and particular religious rituals can provoke defensiveness” if unexpected by the opposite party.<sup>197</sup> Once rapport has been developed, controversial elements of one’s primary tradition can be introduced slowly.

As this ‘translating’ happens, very often there will be mistakes and misunderstandings. In order to avoid this, Interfaith practitioners also often recommend “listening and repeating” procedures that allow both sides to feel as if they have been heard. As practitioner Leonard Swidler notes, “the interpreted must be able to recognize themselves in the interpretation.” He suggests reciprocal reframing, where both parties reiterate and clarify what the other is expressing. This leads, in the end, to “each participant attempting to experience the partner’s religion or ideology ‘from within.’”<sup>198</sup>

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<sup>196</sup> Paul Knitter, “Is the Pluralist Model a Western Imposition?” in *The Myth of Religious Superiority: A Multifaith Exploration*, ed. Paul Knitter (Maryknoll: Orbis Books, 2005), 29-42.

<sup>197</sup> Mohammed Abu-Nimer, “The Miracles of Transformation through Interfaith Dialogue.” In *Interfaith Dialogue and Peacebuilding*, ed. David Smock (Washington: United States Institute of Peace Press, 2002), 111.

<sup>198</sup> Leonard Swidler, “Interreligious and Inter-Ideological Dialogue: The Matrix for All Systematic Reflection Today,” in *Toward a Universal Theology of Religion*, ed. Leonard Swidler (Maryknoll: Orbis Books, 1987).



Dialogical listening also needs to “allow for acknowledgment of collective and individual injuries.”<sup>199</sup> Often dialogues begin after long periods of violence and animosity. Given this, one of the primary goods is to “give participants an opportunity to share their suffering and to be assured that their hurts are taken serious by those on the other side.”<sup>200</sup> In order for this to be effective, they focus on the virtues of humility and graciousness while in the process. Emotions will be high, and parties need to be prepared for frequent missteps. As David Smock says, “be quick to apologize, and quick offer forgiveness...the topics discussed will be serious and often come from places of pain. Dialogue should offer a place of restoration.”<sup>201</sup>

In the end, the goal of any dialogue is to move beyond merely speaking. Diana Eck, for example, makes this point when she argues that true pluralistic dialogue goes well beyond just learning about the viewpoints others. Instead she sees pluralism as an “energetic engagement with diversity” through “the active seeking of understanding across lines of difference.” This seeking eventually results in “the encounter of commitments” as members realize their interdependence.<sup>202</sup> This leads to our second theme – the importance of *joint projects, resulting in shared spaces*.

In chapter 2 of this dissertation, I mentioned Robert Putnam’s theory of bridged vs. bonded social capital. One of Putnam’s suggestions for a healthy democracy is that individuals ought to strive to find activities that create bridged capital. As he writes, “bridged social capital greases the wheels that allow communities to advance smoothly. Where people are trusting and

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<sup>199</sup> David Smock, “Conclusion,” *Interfaith Dialogue and Peacebuilding*, ed. David Smock (Washington: United States Institute of Peace Press, 2002), 129.

<sup>200</sup> Smock, “Conclusion,” 130.

<sup>201</sup> Smock, “Conclusion,” 131.

<sup>202</sup> Diana Eck, “What Is Pluralism?,” *The Pluralism Project Website*, Accessed Dec 23, 2019, <https://web.archive.org/web/20181224063809/http://pluralism.org/what-is-pluralism/>



trustworthy, and where they are subject to repeated interactions with fellow citizens...

communities see transformation.”<sup>203</sup>

This can happen even when there are social/political/economic problems facing a particular community. Indeed, Interfaith scholar and activist Eboo Patel’s argues in his book *Sacred Ground* argues that one of the great solidifiers of any community is for it to “face a problem jointly.”<sup>204</sup> This is one of the grounding principles of his Interfaith Youth Core. Patel gives an example from the Gujarat State in India. Gujarat has a history of violence between Hindus and Muslims, and during a spike in the early 2000’s many local houses of faith were destroyed. A group of religious youth came together decrying the conflict, and rebuilt both a mosque and a mandir in one of the more ravaged communities. This joint action involved youth of both traditions, and over the course of their project “the suspicion, hatred and intolerance gave way to understanding and co-operation as they mingled and visited each other’s village and homes freely.”<sup>205</sup> Jointly working together allowed for individuals to both a) come to know one another in a way that allowed for ‘Visiting’ b) create “bridged social capital” that enabled a deep form of friendship to flourish.<sup>206</sup> Here participating members went well beyond simple ‘association’ and entered into a true sense of community that extended beyond self-interest or convenience.

This example is also illustrative that peaceful communities can come to exist even in conflict areas, and that groups that have the strength to work together can create new bridges

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<sup>203</sup>Putnam, *Bowling Alone*, 288.

<sup>204</sup> Eboo Patel, *Sacred Ground: Pluralism, Prejudice, and the Promise of America* (New York: Rowman and Littlefield Publishers, 2013).

<sup>205</sup> Patel, *Sacred Ground: Pluralism, Prejudice, and the Promise of America*, 72.

<sup>206</sup> Patel, *Sacred Ground: Pluralism, Prejudice, and the Promise of America*, 23.



even while larger conflicts continue. The participants in the program were not formal leaders of a faction in the conflict, yet their efforts dramatically changed the ‘tone’ of the local community. As the buildings were nearing completion, riots once again broke out in several cities in Gujarat. However, the community who engaged in the joint venture was this time spared. Patel notes that “The villagers were sad at the terrible events that were unfolding in the state, and expressed deep anguish at the loss of innocent lives...They resolved not to get carried away with the hate rhetoric and propaganda that was going on, and to work towards protecting and maintaining peace and understanding in their villages.”<sup>207</sup>

His article in Todd Pittinsky’s *Crossing the Divide* Patel further fleshes out his theory behind why individuals ought to seek common activities. In it he argues, “Interfaith leaders *must* be able to create concrete activities through which people can connect their particular identity to [a] pluralist identity and goal of the common good.... Activities give participants a strong sense of collective accomplishment and opportunities for mutual respect.”<sup>208</sup> This sense of collective accomplishment allows participants to develop what he calls a “superordinate identity” that supplements their preexisting group identities. Superordinate identities, as he and Pittinsky define them, are a self-identification that extend beyond particular “tribal” groups while still allowing an individual to maintain their own original religious or cultural identities.<sup>209</sup>

I see this as the creation of pluralistic thinking, taken from the vantage point of identity psychology. When members of a project begin, they likely stand someplace between Exclusivism and Inclusivism. At the most, they have a tolerance of the opposing side which they

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<sup>207</sup> Patel, *Sacred Ground: Pluralism, Prejudice, and the Promise of America*, 73-74.

<sup>208</sup> Eboo Patel, “Interfaith Leadership” in *Crossing the Divide: Intergroup Leadership in a World of Difference*, ed. Todd Pittinsky (Watertown: Harvard Business Review Press, 2016), 240.

<sup>209</sup> Patel, “Interfaith Leadership,” 235.



are working with. However, as they have the opportunity to work closely with members of the new group they “become literate” in their worldviews, and as more bridged social capital grows between them, they begin to respect the values and human worth of their partners. By the end of the process, they are able to both describe and defend the Other’s viewpoints, as well as feel a close sense of loyalty.

During my time at Family Promise shelter I experienced the benefits of common action many times. Part of the Family Promise model is that congregations pair together to take care of homeless families, and often these pairings are interfaith or interdenominational.<sup>210</sup> One such pairing was between a Presbyterian church and a Conservative synagogue. They successfully hosted families together, sharing volunteers and congregational space, for six years. Near the end of my time at the shelter, I encountered volunteers from both congregations eating together at a local restaurant. When I approached the group, they reported that through their joint venture serving the homeless friendships had developed, and now the group of volunteers met regularly for meals. This is the ideal scenario for Eboo Patel. Through their work together, the two groups built up bridged social capital and eventually created a new community that stretches beyond their original purpose in joining together.

Another congregational pairing fared less well. This one, between a Latter Day Saints congregation and an Evangelical church, agreed to host together, but after several joint weeks I noticed that the two groups would ‘silo’ even when working in the same space – they would interact minimally, just enough to complete the task at hand. I spoke to several members of the

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<sup>210</sup> For more on the Family Promise model, particularly its “Interfaith Hospitality Network program, see the Family Promise National Website at:  
<https://web.archive.org/web/20181224064636/https://familypromise.org/programs/core-program/>



group and learned that there were members who were quite uncomfortable, due to theological exclusivism (they believed that their souls were in danger if they developed too close a relationship with someone from a ‘heretical tradition.’). I was worried that the pairing would break down, but there seemed to be enough common purpose for the group to continue to host. This interaction is more illustrative of Marty’s ‘association’ model. The group was willing to serve in a shared capacity, but did not seek deeper relationships or joint identification. They never moved past being merely Inclusivist to a deeper sense of pluralism.

Another benefit of these types of joint activities is that of a healthier environment. Very often these projects focus on concrete changes in the local landscape (i.e.: the creation of new religious spaces in the example above). By formally changing the backdrop of a shared space, these activities create a reminder of the good-faith efforts made by both parties. The space itself then becomes a site of continual shared significance.

This is a point where feminist contributions have been especially helpful to the discipline. Often discussion of relationship building done by male scholars focuses heavily on ‘formal’ aspects of negotiation or planning. However, feminists have recently noted that much of the development of shared practices firsts happens among the women in communities. For example, Meena Sharify-Funk and Christina Woolner argue that women are often ignored as mere “workers” and are not treated as architects of community building.<sup>211</sup> However, their “informal” roles create the initial “grounding trust that formal negotiations can be based on.” They use examples from the “Zone of Peace” developed in the Bual zone in the Philippines. In this

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<sup>211</sup>Meena Sharify-Funk and Christina Woolner, “Women, Religion, and Peacebuilding,” in *The Ashgate Research Companion to Religion and Conflict Resolution*, ed. Lee Marsden (Burlington: Ashgate Publishing Company, 2009), 142.



conflict, much of the peacebuilding was started by women long before formal peace talks began. Muslim and Christian women started friendships as they jointly took care of children on local playgrounds, and assisted neighbors of other faiths in the care of ill relatives. Working together, these Philippian women created a new, more pluralistic, perception of shared space that went contrary to the more legalistic vision that concerned the men. Once these relationships had developed, they then used their influence as wives, mothers, and sisters to influence their husbands to begin formal peace efforts.<sup>212</sup>

The third element that I will focus on here is a *shared utopic vision* of the future. Coming back to our earlier discussion of Karl Mannheim, Utopia was for Mannheim a necessary aspect of human psychology. He described in *Structures of Thinking* that “Utopia contains the direction, the point of view, the perspective, and the set of questions from which the present and past become comprehensible...it imbues life with meaning and allows a new type of [hu]man to come into being.”<sup>213</sup>

Mannheim argued that all communities create these Utopic visions. The question is how broad such a vision can become. As we have seen, for Exclusivists, Utopia is marked by a single group’s triumphalist narrative. They develop a narrow view of the good which necessitates the erasure of competing viewpoints. This then leads to practices (proselytization or oppression) that implement this vision. Inclusivist Utopias are more tolerant of opposing viewpoints, but they still suffer from this reductionist tendency. The Other in this scenario is reduced to a “harmless fool” that does not understand themselves, or alternately the Utopia settles for a unifying vision of

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<sup>212</sup> Sharify-Funk and Woolner, “Women, Religion, and Peacebuilding,” 145-148.

<sup>213</sup> Karl Mannheim, *Structures of Thinking*, ed. David Kettler (1936, London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1997), 246-247. I de-gendered his language.



weak ‘associations.’ Here the ideal is a disconnected social world, with communities are peaceful, but only loosely held together by mutual benefit.

A Pluralist Utopia will instead be marked by the creation of a shared story that incorporates all of the various members of the public and recognizes the value of all. This type of vision is encouraged by sources who work with Intergroup and Interfaith relations. For example, Todd Pittinsky stresses the importance of creating “a new identity focused on a future in which they all can share, without eliminating their individual histories.”<sup>214</sup> This involves conceptualizing new forms of relationship between longstanding groups. Here he uses the example of Martin Luther King Jr’s 1963 “I have a dream speech.” In this famous speech, King described a future that is radically different from the present: “I have a dream that one day on the red hills of Georgia the sons of former slaves and the sons of former slave owners will be able to sit down together at the table of brotherhood.” By imagining a future where African Americans and Caucasians live peacefully together, as equals, he redirected attention away from “the cup of bitterness and hatred” and towards a new vision that transcended the race relations of the day.<sup>215</sup> Pittinsky writes that this “provided [activists] with a redefined self-understanding, a new frame of reference for judging the appropriateness of responses and collective action.”<sup>216</sup>

Even Martin E. Marty, who is highly skeptical of the possibility of “deep community-building,” admits that “citizens need to tell stories of the origins of their common life.” These stories “help bring new national existence into being” by “ordering future endeavors of the

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<sup>214</sup> Pittinsky. *Crossing the Divide*, 78-79.

<sup>215</sup> Martin Luther King, Jr. “I have a Dream...” (Speech given during the "March on Washington," Washington, DC, August 28, 1963).

<sup>216</sup> Pittinsky. *Crossing the Divide*, 59.



group.” This new “cohesive sentiment” enables individuals to get along enough to engage in ongoing joint projects.<sup>217</sup>

Utopic thinking is also a central aspect of the research methodology used in my surveys, Appreciative Inquiry. One of the central facets of Appreciate Inquiry is the “Anticipatory Principle.” This principle holds that “the images we create in our minds about the future guide our present actions and create that very future.”<sup>218</sup> Jacqueline Kelm notes that individuals “continuously form and hold images...and then ‘live into’ these images.” One of the goals of Appreciative Inquiry is to create sets of questions that allow one to imagine what “living in diversity” would look like, and direct them towards both imagining the Other. It then proposes a series of imaginative exercises that are designed to help individuals visualize what a “shared life” might look like.<sup>219</sup> This method has long use by Interfaith Dialogue practitioners. Most notably, Appreciative Inquiry is the model utilized by Stanford University’s peacemaking initiative known as the “United Religions Initiative,” a grassroots interfaith network that focuses on building relationships across religious boundaries and forming inter-religious working groups which collectively solve problems in the community. Their discussion questions lists were the primary source material for the questions I develop.<sup>220</sup> I speak of Appreciative Inquiry’s philosophy and methods again in greater detail in the next chapter.

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<sup>217</sup> Marty, *The One and the Many*, 163, 178.

<sup>218</sup> Jacqueline Kelm, *Appreciative Living: The Principles of Appreciative Inquiry in Personal Life* (Charleston: Venet Publishers, 2015), 71.

<sup>219</sup> Kelm, *Appreciative Living: The Principles of Appreciative Inquiry in Personal Life*, 78-79.

<sup>220</sup> Charles Gibbs, “The United Religions Initiative at Work,” in *Interfaith Dialogue and Peacemaking*, ed. David Smock (Washington DC: United States Institute of Peace, 2002,2007), 115-126.



## SUMMARY

In summary, we see that both Inclusivism and Pluralism offer a more positive framework towards engagement of the Other than an Exclusivist path. Whereas Exclusivist thought operates primarily on a fight or flight mechanism in relation to the Other, both Inclusivism and Exclusivism find ways to share space with neighboring communities. Inclusivism still maintains a singular vision of the truth, but alternate viewpoints are allowed to associate. They are treated as either benign but confused, or as someone who is tolerated due to a degree of shared values or interests. Pluralists are the only of the three categories that believe that there can be multiple true paths to human flourishing, and as such are much more open to the viewpoints of the Other. This allows for a much easier acceptance of the Other's viewpoint, and to a more conflict-free form of partnership. Pluralism, with its highly accepting vision of truth, in many ways provides the easiest path for understanding of the Other. However, either Pluralism or Inclusivism are preferable to Exclusivism, which always ultimately regards diversity as a threat to be dealt with.

As “core characteristics” for Inclusivism and Pluralism, I develop the following framework:

*Table 1 - Core Characteristics in Comparison*

<b>Exclusivism</b>	<b>Inclusivism</b>	<b>Pluralism</b>
-Truth as Singular	-Truth as Singular	-Truth as Plural or Multi-Faceted
-Ethic of Purity	-Ethic of Tolerance/Association	-Ethic of Respect/Visiting
-Other should be Converted/Removed	-Other as 'Confused'	-Other as Friendly but Different



In respect to Inclusivism I utilize the following - a) a conception of truth that is still singular (this characteristic is shared with Exclusivism), b) an ethic of tolerance, expressed through a willingness to associate with the Other, and c) at the same time, the Other is treated as in some way “confused” or otherwise mistaken in their beliefs.

For Pluralism, a) truth is understood at plural or multifaceted. This includes the possibility that there are multiple ways that communities can thrive or grow. As a result, there is a b) ethic of respect, governed by the practice of “visiting” one’s neighbors. Finally, we see that c) the Other is conceived of as truly different but not threatening, allowing for the greatest chance for deep friendship to develop.

These core concepts will be addressed again in the later chapters of this work, as they were operationalized during my data analysis in Chapter 4 and Chapter 5. Our discussion will now turn to the research portion of this work, beginning with my research methodology.



## **Chapter 4: Research Methodology**

This chapter will explore my empirical research methodology and its philosophical frameworks, as well as an overview of the process of creating and implementing the surveys conducted as part of this project.

I begin with a description of Grounded Theory, both in its original formulation as proposed by Barney Glaser and Anselm Strauss, as well as more recent constructivist variations used by feminist researchers such as Kathy Charmaz. This ‘style’ of research informed my approach to data collection and interpretation. Broadly speaking, Grounded Theory has an inductive approach to investigation, which contrasts heavily to more mainstream positivistic ways of going about social scientific research. This inductive reasoning was a major reason that I ended up doing two surveys as a part of this project – clues laid in my first survey led to additional research questions that formed the basis of my second investigation.

The research for both surveys was conducted online using a service known as Amazon Mechanical Turk. The chapter will touch upon the pros and cons of this method as a research tool, both in respect to its reputation in the wider social science community as well as its use for my own particular project.

Finally, this chapter will also discuss the Appreciative Inquiry model in greater detail, as it formed the basis of my second survey. Appreciative Inquiry ties together a number of threads in this dissertation. It is an inductive, grounded research approach that places considerable value on “utopic” forms of thought. It is also used frequently by researchers who are studying diversity and conflict, including those involved with Interfaith programming. As such, it will serve as the backbone of the later chapters of this text.



## METHODOLOGICAL APPROACH – GROUNDED THEORY

Operationally, my empirical research has been developed using what qualitative researchers term “Grounded Theory.” Broadly speaking, Grounded Theory takes an inductive approach to empirical research. Grounded theorists begin with the “lived, interpretive experience of individuals.”<sup>221</sup> The researcher approaches the participants with a “blank slate of expectation” and then begins to develop new theory based on received responses. As qualitative researcher Kathy Charmaz writes, “We do not force preconceived ideas and theories directly upon our data. Rather we follow leads that arise out of the process.”<sup>222</sup>

This differs markedly from most positivistic views about how social science ought to be conducted. The positivist method assumes that an unbiased and objective observer collects facts, but in no way participates in creating them. It is highly cautious about the creation of theory, preferring instead to refine and test extant theory utilizing hypotheses.<sup>223</sup>

Grounded Theory was developed by Barney Glaser and Anselm Strauss in the groundbreaking text *The Discovery of Grounded Theory*.<sup>224</sup> Their text was both an epistemological critique of the social science research of the 1960’s as well as a textbook of methods by which one should carry out qualitative research. They argued that most quantitative research at the time “taught researchers little about how to tackle analyzing piles of collected

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<sup>221</sup> Charmaz, *Constructing Grounded Theory*, 10.

<sup>222</sup> Charmaz, *Constructing Grounded Theory*, 17.

<sup>223</sup> Joseph Maxwell, *Qualitative Research Design: An Interactive Approach* (Thousand Oaks: Sage Publications, 2005), 7.

<sup>224</sup> Barney Glaser and Anselm Strauss, *Discovering Grounded Theory: Strategies for Qualitative Research* (New Brunswick: Transaction Publishers, 1967).



data.” Their belief was that most research simply gave independent nodes of information, but failed to actively make substantive meaning from the collected responses.<sup>225</sup>

Their method instead focused highly on systematic observations, always resulting in the development of new explanatory theories that fit the data. Typically their research focused on psychological or social processes that arise in specific social settings. Perhaps most famous of these were their studies of grieving and death in hospitals.<sup>226</sup> At the time few researchers had considered social interactions in hospitals relating to death. Their observational research resulted in new theories that have been impactful for both the fields of psychology, counseling, and sociology as well as led to the creation of a whole generation of ‘best practices’ in the hospital and nursing home industries.<sup>227</sup>

I am especially interested in a variation of Grounded Theory promoted by feminist theorist and researcher Kathy Charmaz.<sup>228</sup> In classical Grounded Theory as promoted by founders Barney Glaser and Anselm Strauss,<sup>229</sup> theory is “discovered over the course of the interpretive process” (hence the name of their text, *Discovery of Grounded Theory*). Charmaz and other feminist researchers have taken Glaser and Strauss’ methods and reframed them using social constructivist principles. As Charmaz writes, “Unlike [Glaser and Strauss], I assume that neither data nor theories are ‘discovered.’ Rather, we are part of the world we study and the data

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<sup>225</sup> Glaser and Strauss, *Discovering Grounded Theory: Strategies for Qualitative Research*, 4.

<sup>226</sup> Barney Glaser and Anselm Strauss, *Awareness of Dying*. (Chicago: Aldine Press, 1965); Barney Glaser and Anselm Strauss, *Time for Dying* (Chicago: Aldine Press, 1968); Barney Glaser and Anselm Strauss, *Status Passage* (Chicago: Aldine Press, 1971).

<sup>227</sup> Tom Andrews, “Awareness of Dying Remains Relevant after Fifty Years,” *Grounded Theory Review: An International Journal*. Issue 2 (December 2015).  
<https://web.archive.org/web/20180420234652/http://groundedtheoryreview.com/2015/12/19/awareness-of-dying-remains-relevant-after-fifty-years/>

<sup>228</sup> Kathy Charmaz, *Constructing Grounded Theory* (Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE Publications, 2006).

<sup>229</sup> Glaser and Strauss, *Discovering Grounded Theory: Strategies for Qualitative Research*, 9.



we collect. We *construct* [italics hers] our theories alongside those we study, through our involvements and interactions.”<sup>230</sup> This social constructivist principle is especially central to my second round of research (see below). To avoid confusion, special note should be made here to compare “Social Constructivism” with “Social Constructionism.” Social Constructivists argue that “knowledge and reality are constructed within individuals.”<sup>231</sup> They focus on a person’s “biological and cognitive processes” as they internalize a particular belief, or as Berger and Luckman would say, the “internalization of a constructed reality.”<sup>232</sup> Social Constructionists, in contrast, focus on “artifacts created through social interchange”<sup>233</sup> Their analysis looks at Berger and Luckman call the “objectification” phase of social construction. Our analysis will be carried out working under a “constructivist” rubric, as is promoted by Charmaz and other practitioners.

Returning to our discussion of Grounded Theory, this technique also differs from other social science methodologies in its non-linearity. The Grounded Theory process is typically multi-stage, with initial impressions leading to additional research. As Charmaz notes, “Grounded theorists follow inquiry wherever it takes us...some of our best ideas may occur late in the process, and lure us back to the field to gain a deeper view.”<sup>234</sup> These in turn, lead to both more detailed answers and further research questions.

This exploratory attitude reflects my overall process quite well. When I began my first survey, I had initially intended this project to be focused more directly in the areas of social

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<sup>230</sup> Charmaz, *Constructing Grounded Theory*, 10-11.

<sup>231</sup> John Sommers-Flanagan, “Constructivism vs. Social Constructionism: What’s the Difference?,” Dr. John Sommers Flanagan Blog, December 2, 2015, <https://web.archive.org/web/20190307182005/https://johnsommersflanigan.com/2015/12/05/constructivism-vs-social-constructionism-whats-the-difference/> ; See Also: John Sommers-Flanagan and Rita Sommers-Flanagan, *Counseling and Psychotherapy Theories in Context and Practice* (Hoboken: John Wiley and Sons, 2012).

<sup>232</sup> Berger and Luckman, *The Social Construction of Reality*, 6.

<sup>233</sup> Sommers-Flanagan, Paragraph 6.

<sup>234</sup> Charmaz, *Constructing Grounded Theory*, 14.



movements, particularly those against the current Trump administration. The narrative findings from my first round of interviews led me in a whole new direction, necessitating a second round of surveys based on new foundational principles. This exploration eventually ended with this current project.

Grounded theorists fully support these types of ‘pivots’ as a necessary research acumen. As Charmaz writes, “Sensitizing concepts and disciplinary perspectives provide a place to start, not to end....if some concepts prove to be irrelevant, then we dispense with them. In contrast, traditional quantitative research necessitates operationalizing established concepts in a way that ‘locks’ you into using them.”<sup>235</sup>

## QUALITATIVE ONLINE SURVEYS

Methodologically my dissertation works within frameworks developed by qualitative researchers with one important exception: the primary tool used for gathering data (online surveys) is more commonly associated with quantitative research. I have several reasons for this choice:

First, the central research focus of my dissertation is on the opinions and thoughts of the ‘masses’ – everyday lay members instead of political or theological elites. To a large degree, political discourse in the United States is controlled by elite figures. However, I would like to ‘get behind’ the dominant ideologues and work from the standpoint of the multitude. Survey

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<sup>235</sup> Charmaz, *Constructing Grounded Theory*, 17.



methods allow one to reach out to a broad swath of the American public, and hear the voices of large numbers of ordinary citizens from numerous socio-economic and racial backgrounds.

Second, this methodology also has the advantage of comparatively quick data collection. Once a survey is posted online, it typically takes less than 48 hours for the requested number of participants to complete the questionnaire. The 3 month window for the first round was primarily due to budget limitations (I budgeted \$500/month for survey payments) but the initial run could have been done much faster, cash allowing. My second survey was completed in only one and one-half weeks. This is incredibly fast when compared to in-person interviews, which researchers spend weeks or even months collecting. As an online survey it also presents minimal risks to respondents versus many other methodologies (i.e. in person interviews), which made for an expedited IRB process.

Third, in addition to being quick, online surveys allow one to gather data from a very large number of individuals. My initial survey reached 850 individuals. Even after filtering participants through an ‘attention check’ (a trick question intended to weed out participants who pay little attention to the process and are likely to give erroneous or random answers) I was left with 716 subjects for analysis. My second survey collected 162 responses, of which 150 were kept as valid subjects for reflection and coding.

The narrative aspects of my initial survey resulted in a large amount of data for examination. Even given the relatively small amount written by any one individual (ranging from two sentences to three paragraphs per question), the survey brought in 27,553 words, or just over 110 pages of transcript. In addition, it provided a large number of statistical data that could be



used for additional research if needed. The second survey provided 175 pages and 42,991 words of responses. Combined these resulted in a joint 285 pages and 70,544 words.

## AMAZON MECHANICAL TURK

The tool used for this collection is known as “Amazon Mechanical Turk” or MTurk. MTurk is an online networking service developed by Amazon in 2005 that allows researchers to pay ‘Turkers’ (Mechanical Turk Workers) to complete online tasks.<sup>236</sup> Currently MTurk hosts over 500,000 Turkers from 190 countries. Over the last decade MTurk has been used increasingly in social science fields, including psychology, sociology and political science.

To initiate a survey using MTurk, a researcher (a “Requester” in Amazon’s lingo) establishes an account ([www.mturk.com](http://www.mturk.com)), places funds into their account, and then posts a “job listing” using the MTurk web interface. These postings, known as “Human Intelligence Tasks” (HITs) are displayed on the MTurk website, and Turkers choose to take surveys that spark their interest. Turkers typically receive a small cash amount (\$1.00-\$5.00) to take each survey.

Requesters can, however, set various requirements for their survey. For example, in my survey I limited applicants to only Turkers who are within the United States. Requesters can also limit applications by their prior “approval rate.” Following survey completion, Requesters have three days to review the submitted survey, and approve or reject the survey. This allows requesters to filter out surveys that are fraudulent or incomplete. Turkers thus have an incentive to fill out surveys correctly. If they fail too many HITs their rating will be low enough that they

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<sup>236</sup> To view MTurk online, visit <https://www.mturk.com/mturk/welcome/>



will be barred from many studies. When Turkers log into their account, they can only see HITs whose criteria they meet.

Existing social science literature suggests that a cap be set requiring at least a 90% approval rate for Turkers. For my initial survey I followed this suggestion, and for the second I raised the approval rate to 95%.<sup>237</sup> Raising the bar was something of an experiment on my part. If the rating is set too high, surveys can take longer to complete or in the worst cases may not be able to be completed at all. Even with the higher rating, my second survey was completed in five days.

The MTurk interface gives the researcher a great deal of flexibility to conduct a study. In addition to using MTurk's embedded workspace to set up simple tasks, the researcher can also refer subjects to an external website. For instance, in most HITs subjects are referred to an outside webpage to take a survey. Outside websites allow researchers to obtain informed consent, implement additional screening procedures, debrief after an experiment, and collect detailed information about the survey process (including response times for items and respondents' location when taking the survey as determined on the basis of the respondents' Internet Protocol [IP] address).

For my surveys, participants were referred to "Qualtrics" webpages. Qualtrics is a web-based software designed to facilitate online surveys. Access to the program is offered through Claremont School of Theology's partnership with Claremont Graduate University. The survey was loaded into Qualtrics software, and Turkers were given a special link that transferred them from Mechanical Turk to a Qualtrics page. This link first took them to a consent form, and then

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<sup>237</sup> Adam Berinsky, et al., "Using Mechanical Turk as a Subject Recruitment Tool for Experimental Research," Working Paper, *MIT Statistical Review* 10, no. 4 (2011): 892-912.



to the survey if they agreed. If they refused, they were taken back to the MTurk page. Once they had completed the survey, Qualtrics would generate a 10 digit key code that would then unlock their payment in MTurk. This feature acts to prohibit Turkers from requesting payment after only impartially filling out their survey.

Amazon Mechanical Turk also provides several other options for vetting survey data. Once Turkers complete their survey and turn in their code, Requesters are given an adjustable period of time to check over responses and to approve/reject any particular survey. The ability to reject invalid surveys is one of the strengths of this medium, and is frequently cited as an advantage of the model.<sup>238</sup> If surveys are not rejected within that window they are automatically approved. MTurk standard practice is to allow Requesters 3 days to review the surveys.<sup>239</sup> For my work I followed their suggested protocols.

When a survey is rejected Requestors must given a written account why they failed each Turker. I followed one of two methodologies for rejecting Requestors. My first survey, which was more statistical in nature, had within it two “Attention Check” questions. These are effectively ‘trick’ questions, intended to catch if Turkers are reading the prompts given within the survey or just clicking answers randomly. These included one sub-question requesting them to “strongly disagree” with a blank space (question 11) and another that simply asked them to “Please check this box” (question 29). These two requests resulted in 131 of the 850 individuals who took the survey being rejected.

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<sup>238</sup> Andrew Desoto, “Under the Hood of Mechanical Turk,” *Observer* (March 2016), <https://web.archive.org/web/20181017070750/https://www.psychologicalscience.org/observer/under-the-hood-of-mechanical-turk>; Gabrielle Paolacci and Jesse Chandler, “Inside the Turk, Understanding MTurk as a Participant Pool.” *Research and Politics* 23, no 3 (June 2014): 184-188.

<sup>239</sup> Adam Berinsky, et al., “Using Mechanical Turk as a Subject Recruitment Tool for Experimental Research,” 895.



My second survey was considerably more ‘narrative’ in scope, and also had a smaller number of responses. This allowed me to vet the individual written portions of the surveys. In my second round of surveys I implemented an added feature of Mechanical Turk, which was unknown to me when I did my first study. It allowed me to set a maximum number of *accepted* surveys. Thus, I ended with 150 valid surveys after having given 162. The surveys that were rejected here were excluded due to participants copying and pasting random web text into the survey boxes (these included online *Rolling Stone* articles and in one case a tampon advertisement...suffice to say it was fairly easy to identify fraudulent entries).

One potential weakness of this model from an empirical standpoint is the fact that the participants are self-selected. This is a common critique leveraged against Mechanical Turk, and one that researchers have been eager to test over the last several years.<sup>240</sup> Michael Burhmester, in his 2011 evaluation of Mechanical Turk, found that it provides a more representative sampling than other common self-selected methodologies. His results showed that the program provides a more accurate representation of American demographics than in-person surveys on college campuses or other internet-based methods such as free internet surveys.<sup>241</sup> John Ross et. al. found that the effects of self-selection bias were no worse for Mechanical Turk than for other types of experimental surveys that include remuneration.<sup>242</sup> They did, however, find that participants in a ‘flat sample’ were more likely to over represent young, highly educated, and low income individuals when compared to the larger U.S. population.<sup>243</sup> Mechanical Turk also

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<sup>240</sup> Adam Berinsky, et al., “Using Mechanical Turk as a Subject Recruitment Tool for Experimental Research,” 983.

<sup>241</sup> Michael Buhrmester, “Amazon’s Mechanical Turk: A New Source of Inexpensive, Yet High-Quality, Data,” *Political Analysis* 6, no. 1 (2011): 351-368.

<sup>242</sup> John Ross, Isabel Irani, Matt Silberman, Asman Zaldivar, and Betty Tomlinson, “Who are the Crowdworkers?: Shifting Demographics in Amazon Mechanical Turk” *CHI EA* 1, no. 1 (2010): 2863-2872.

<sup>243</sup> John Ross, et al. Who are the Crowdworkers?: Shifting Demographics in Amazon Mechanical Turk,” 2868.



holds up very well versus other major survey tools. Researchers have found that in most situations their surveys are consistent with the findings of large phone surveys conducted by major pollsters.<sup>244</sup> Adam Berenks et. al. found that the method was “as accurate as the modal sample in published experimental political science.”<sup>245</sup> It was “modestly less representative” than large national probability samples, but “well within expected norms” for social science reporting.<sup>246</sup>

It should also be noted that Amazon Mechanical Turk allows for “targeted sampling” across most demographic categories if the researcher is interested in artificially replicating a particular demographic ratio. For example, in a sample of 1000 one could set a ‘cap’ on Caucasian Non-Hispanic respondents at 626 (62.6%), the percentage Caucasians reported in the most recent U.S. census. For my surveys I allowed Mechanical Turk to run without added filtering. Even without filters my surveys did end up being broadly representative, sufficient for my current investigation. The findings section will describe my results in more detail.

Mechanical Turk has also been used successfully for studying similar topics to my own in both the Political Science and Religious Studies fields. Within Political Science discussions, Scott Clifford et. al. evaluated the study of political ideology and partisanship using MTurk’s population. They recreated two benchmark national samples from the ANES 2012 Time Series Study (The ANES included both in-person and web-based survey elements). They found that “[Mechanical Turk] samples produce substantively identical results with only minor variation in

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<sup>244</sup> Joseph Goodman, et al., “Data Collection in a Flat World: The Strengths and Weaknesses of Mechanical Turk Samples,” *Journal of Behavioral Decision Making* 26, no. 1 (2012): 213–224; Mason Winter and Siddarth Suri, “Conducting Behavioral Research on Amazon’s Mechanical Turk,” *Behavioral Research* 44, no. 1 (2012): 13–23; Adam Berinsky, et al. “Using Mechanical Turk as a Subject Recruitment Tool for Experimental Research,” Working Paper, *MIT Statistical Review* 10 (2011): 892–912.

<sup>245</sup> Adam Berinsky, et al., “Using Mechanical Turk as a Subject Recruitment Tool for Experimental Research,” 893.

<sup>246</sup> Adam Berinsky, et al., “Using Mechanical Turk as a Subject Recruitment Tool for Experimental Research,” 910.



effect sizes. In short, liberals and conservatives in our MTurk sample closely mirror the psychological divisions of liberals and conservatives in the mass public.”<sup>247</sup>

Within the field of religion, the most influential piece of research utilizing this methodology has been Andrew Lewis et. al.’s recent article “The (Non) Religion of Mechanical Turk Workers” in the *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion*.<sup>248</sup> Lewis et. al. complete several large surveys utilizing the MTurk platform that ask standard questions about religious participation, identity, and spirituality, as well as participants’ political opinions. These are compared to results collected from General Social Surveys.

Lewis et. al. found that within any one surveyed tradition (i.e. Evangelical Christians, Muslims etc.) there were no statistically significant differences in measures of religiosity, either in measures of orthodoxy (i.e. belief in the Trinity or Biblical inerrancy) or in political opinions. There were however, disproportionate numbers of some demographic groups, particularly of individuals who identify as “nones” or “spiritual but not religious.”<sup>249</sup> This secular over-representation was present in my surveys as well. However, Lewis et al.’s findings do suggest that those individuals who do report being religious in my surveys have similar characteristics as the broader public.

## SURVEY #1 RESEARCH ELEMENTS

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<sup>247</sup> Scott Clifford, Ryan Jewell, Philip Waggoner, “Are samples drawn from Mechanical Turk valid for research on political ideology?” *Research and Politics* (October 2015): 1-9.

<sup>248</sup> Andrew Lewis Et al., “The (Non) Religion of Mechanical Turk Workers.” *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion*. 54.2 (2015): 419–428.

<sup>249</sup> Andrew Lewis, et al., “The (Non) Religion of Mechanical Turk Workers,” 425.



My first survey was intended to collect a broad range of demographic and religious information about participants, as well as to test their beliefs about race, politics and activism. The survey itself contains considerably more information than was used for my current project. It is my hope that I can return to these elements for further research in the future.

The first survey begins with demographic information (taken from the *General Social Survey*<sup>250</sup>) and questions about religious views and practices (from the *Pew Religious Landscape Study*<sup>251</sup>). They were placed in the survey to allow for the verification of external validity, and to confirm that the sample is consistent with other empirical literature. The General Social Survey is one of the oldest and most reliable surveys conducted in the American environment. It began in 1972. In addition, it was created such that it incorporates questions from prior surveys that in many cases go back 80+ years.<sup>252</sup>

With the development of the internet, the survey was loaded online, and relevant data from earlier periods was incorporated into their web platform along with their result. Over time the survey has also grown to incorporate a number of “special interest topics” that include questions on civil liberties, crime and violence and morality, spending priorities, social mobility, stress and trauma, and psychological wellbeing among others.<sup>253</sup> The result is “the single best

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<sup>250</sup> General Social Survey, “GSS 2014” NORC at the University of Chicago. Sample surveys maybe created at: <https://gssdataexplorer.norc.org/>

<sup>251</sup> “2014 Religious Landscape Study,” *Pew Research*, May 2015, <https://web.archive.org/web/20181010063803/http://www.pewforum.org/files/2015/05/RLS-II-FINAL-TOPLINE-FOR-FIRST-RELEASE.pdf>.

<sup>252</sup> “About the GSS,” The General Social Survey. Accessed October 21, 2018, <https://web.archive.org/web/20181021172414/http://gss.norc.org/About-The-GSS>

<sup>253</sup> Charles Chandler and Yung-Mei Tsai, “Social Factors influencing immigration attitudes: an analysis of data from the General Social Survey.” *The Social Science Journal* 38, no.2 (Summer 2011): 177-188. <https://web.archive.org/web/20181021174659/http://www.pewforum.org/about-the-religious-landscape-study/>



source for sociological and attitudinal trend data covering the United States.” Its online system also makes it one of the user friendly databases in existence.<sup>254</sup>

The *Pew Religious Landscape Study* was added to deepen questions specifically around religion. The PRLS survey is relatively new, having first been conducted in 2007. The survey was intended to be both the largest and most in-depth survey around religious topics ever constructed.<sup>255</sup> Since the survey was conducted by the private organization the Pew Research Center, it was developed to be publically available and sports one of the most attractive and easily accessible websites in the social science community.

The survey is based on 35,000 telephone interviews from individuals of all 50 states. The large sample size gives it a remarkably small margin of error, and since its creation it has been used as a baseline for a large number of social science studies involving religion.<sup>256</sup> The questions it asks cover a variety of topics, including belief in God, rates of religious service attendance, increases and declines in numbers of individuals affiliated with virtually all religious groups, and geographic breakdowns of specific populations. The extremely large sample size also allows for detailed analysis of smaller religious sects, many of whom make up less than 1% of the American religious body.<sup>257</sup>

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<sup>254</sup> “About the GSS,” *The General Social Survey*, Accessed October 21, 2018,

<https://web.archive.org/web/20181021172414/http://gss.norc.umd.edu/About-The-GSS>

<sup>255</sup> “About the Religious Landscape Survey,” *Pew Forum*, Accessed October 21, 2018,

<https://web.archive.org/web/20181021174659/http://www.pewforum.org/about-the-religious-landscape-study/>

<sup>256</sup> For example: Jean Twenge, Ryne Sherman and Julie Exline, “Declines in American Adults’ Religious Participation and Beliefs, 1972-2014,” *Sage Open*, Online Journal(March 2016). <https://doi.org/10.1177/2158244016638133>;

Tyler VanderWeele et al. “Attendance at Religious Services, Prayer, Religious Coping, and Religious/Spiritual Identity as Predictors of All-Cause Mortality,” *American Journal of Epidemiology* 185, no. 7 (April 2017): 515-522.

<sup>257</sup> “About the Religious Landscape Survey” *Pew Forum*. Accessed October 21, 2018,

<https://web.archive.org/web/20181021174659/http://www.pewforum.org/about-the-religious-landscape-study/>



As a supplement, I also expanded upon their primary questionnaire with another resource from Pew known as the “Religious Bias Index.” This survey was initially designed by Pew and expanded upon by Robert Jones at the Public Religion Research Institute.<sup>258</sup> This test asks questions about both a participant’s perceptions of other faiths, as well as the degree to which they have interacted with members of other traditions. The PRLS study primarily aims to catalogue details about belief structures, but is comparatively weak in tracing interactions between individuals/religious groups.

Relationships will be drawn out in more detail later, but suffice to say review of the results indicates that the sample does not fall far outside of the demographic results of either of the above studies.

In order to test participants’ political leanings, the “Progressive Social Movement Ideology Test” developed by Aaron McCright and Riley Dunlap was employed.<sup>259</sup> This test was specifically designed to measure respondent’s sympathies towards a number of progressive issues, including: civil rights, women’s rights, abortion rights, LGBT issues etc. Their responses are then indexed to give respondents a master score that correlates with their overall sympathy towards progressive thought.

Conceptually, McCright and Dunlap’s research looks at the relationship between what they call a “movement family” and more particular issue-based activism. They argue that the liberal “master frame” is an ideology based on the “extension and protection of rights.”<sup>260</sup> Their

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<sup>258</sup> Robert Jones, “December 2015 Survey – Perceptions of Islam” *PRRI*, December 10, 2015.

<sup>259</sup> Aaron McCright and Riley E. Dunlap. “The Nature and Social Bases of Progressive Social Movement Ideology: Examining Public Opinion toward Social Movements,” *The Sociological Quarterly* 49, no. 4 (2008): 825-848.

<sup>260</sup> McCright and Dunlap, “The Nature and Social Bases of Progressive Social Movement Ideology: Examining Public Opinion toward Social Movements,” 826.



survey is intended as a test to judge how successful the liberal master frame has been at synthesizing these different issues into its overall ideology which they term “Progressive Social Movement Ideology.”<sup>261</sup>

Apart from their theoretical scaffolding, their questionnaire is helpful in that it allows researchers to be able to consider both the popularity of different social movements, as well as the perceived impact of those movements at a given time. Their survey has elsewhere been implemented to such effect.<sup>262</sup>

In that spirit, I expanded upon one of their key indicators myself, by asking more detailed questions about activist actions undertaken by respondents in the last 12 months. This involved looking at their involvement in political events, rallies and protests; fundraising or philanthropic activity for relevant political organizations, engagement on social media or in local newspapers, and direct participation on relevant candidates’ campaigns. I also asked follow-up questions about activism around particular issues, working from the assumption that many individuals are politically active around special interests vs. party politics. This included McCright and Dunlap’s full suite of “Rights Issues,” (civil/racial rights, abortion rights, LGBTQ rights, environmental rights, women’s rights, animal rights, consumer rights, labor rights etc.). Although not pertinent to this particular investigation, I hope to separately publish on these findings as I find it to be a hole in the sociological literature in respect to McCright and Dunlap’s theories.

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<sup>261</sup> McCright and Dunlap, “The Nature and Social Bases of Progressive Social Movement Ideology: Examining Public Opinion toward Social Movements,” 827-828.

<sup>262</sup> See: Judith Adler Hellman, “The Riddle of New Social Movement: Who they are and what they Do,” in *Capital, Power, and Inequality*, ed. Sandor Halebsky (London: Taylor Francis, 2018), 87-105; Donatella della Porta et. al., *The Global Justice Movement: Cross-National and Transnational Perspectives*, (London: Taylor Francis, 2015), 24.



In order to garner attitudes on race specifically, I also included a battery of questions asking about racial bias. These are also common questions used in a number of American surveys, and offer inquiries such as “If minorities just tried harder they could be just as well off as whites.” Initially developed as a measure of “racial resentment,” these have a long history of being included with studies going back to 1980’s and have been utilized for empirical analysis across many fields of research.<sup>263</sup>

Finally, I included a set of qualitative questions that were developed in consultation with Prof. Najeeba Syeed:

- 1) In your opinion, what is the best way to create positive social change for your community?*
- 2) Think of a group that makes you uncomfortable (this could mean people of a different race, political affiliation, or religion). What, if anything, would make you more comfortable working with them on a project you both believe in?*
- 3) What are the top factors that hold you back from engaging more in politics?*

These qualitative questions became the bedrock of my second survey and much of the later theorizing in this dissertation. In Chapter 5 I will provide an overview of the responses for the entire survey, with a much more particular focus on interpreting the qualitative responses. See Appendix B for a full list of questions that were asked during the study.

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<sup>263</sup> Edward Carmines, Paul Sniderman and Beth Easter, “On the Meaning, Measurement, and Implications of Racial Resentment,” *The Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science* 634, no 2 (2011): 98-116.



## SURVEY #2 RESEARCH ELEMENTS – APPRECIATIVE INQUIRY

Following the collection and interpretation of the data from my first survey data in mid-2018, I began forming the overarching categories that would eventually become central to this dissertation (i.e. recognizing the presence of ‘Exclusivist’ and ‘Pluralist’ beliefs in survey responses). This opened up a new series of research questions concerning individual’s beliefs and practices about working with others. Initially I had intended for this work to be primarily around engagement in “formal” activism (i.e. marches, organizing etc.). However, I was surprised by the range of answers that discussed engagement that was embedded in individual’s everyday lives (in work, school etc.) With this in mind, I began to develop a new survey with in consultation with Prof. Syeed and my other committee members.

The philosophical groundwork for my second survey is a methodology known as “Appreciative Inquiry.” Appreciative Inquiry is a grounded theory approach that focuses the positive experiences from the subject’s life. Appreciative Inquiry theorist Sue Annis Hammond describes, “The traditional approach to change is to look for the problem, do a diagnosis, and find a solution. The primary focus is on what is wrong or broken; since we look for problems, we find them. By paying attention to problems, we emphasize and amplify them.”<sup>264</sup>

In contrast, Appreciative Inquiry “looks for what works...based on the high moments of where individuals have been.”<sup>265</sup> It is also highly social constructivist, and believes that focusing on positive storytelling expands the human ability to create new futures based on those positive moments. Appreciate Inquiry scholars Whitney, Cooperrider and Trosten-Bloom note that “what we ask determines what we ‘find.’ What we find determines how we talk. How we talk

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<sup>264</sup> Sue Annis Hammond, *The Thin Book of Appreciative Inquiry* (New York: Thin Book Publishing, 1996), 6.

<sup>265</sup> Hammond, *The Thin Book of Appreciative Inquiry*, 7.



determines how we imagine together. How we imagine together determines what we achieve.”<sup>266</sup>

The positive focus amplifies positive traits, and minimizes the elicitation of negative feelings which limit our ability and willingness to bridge difference. Appreciative Inquirers refer to this as the “Positive Principle.”<sup>267</sup>

This method has long use by Interfaith Dialogue practitioners. Indeed, I was first informed of the method as it was described in David Smock’s *Interfaith Dialogue and Peacemaking*, which details several of the Interfaith programs which use it as a tool.<sup>268</sup>

Most notably, Appreciative Inquiry is the model utilized by Stanford University’s peacemaking initiative known as the “United Religions Initiative,” a grassroots interfaith network that focuses on building relationships across religious boundaries and forming inter-religious working groups which collectively solve problems in the community. Their discussion questions lists were the primary source material for the questions I develop below, as their interviewing format is designed to facilitate thought and discussion across boundaries, often in areas where there are preexisting conflicts.<sup>269</sup>

Appreciate Inquiry interviews are typically arranged in a three step pattern centering thematically on an individual or community’s past, present, and future. The process is described by Cooperrider and Whitney rather whimsically: “Pasts, presents, or futures are endless sources of

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<sup>266</sup> Diana Whitney, David Cooperrider, and Amanda Trosten-Bloom. *Encyclopedia of Positive Questions: Using Appreciative Inquiry* (Brunswick: Crown Custom Publishing, 2012), 73.

<sup>267</sup> Diana Whitney and David Cooperrider, *Appreciative Inquiry: A Positive Revolution in Change* (San Francisco: Berrett-Koehler Publishers, 2005), 18.

<sup>268</sup> David Smock (ed.), *Interfaith Dialogue and Peacemaking* (Washington: United States Institute of Peace, 2007). See in particular, Charles Gibbs, “The United Religions Initiative at Work,” 115-126.

<sup>269</sup> “Interfaith Peacebuilding Guide.” Resource Guide, United Religions Initiative (October 2004). [https://web.archive.org/web/20180810055414/http://www.uri.org/sites/default/files/media/document/2017/URI\\_Interfaith\\_Peacebuilding\\_Guide.pdf](https://web.archive.org/web/20180810055414/http://www.uri.org/sites/default/files/media/document/2017/URI_Interfaith_Peacebuilding_Guide.pdf)



learning, inspiration, or interpretation—precisely like, for example, the endless interpretive possibilities in a good piece of poetry or a biblical text.”<sup>270</sup>

The first step, labeled as “stage setting questions,” asks interviewees to draw upon their “personal experience and imagination” by telling stories from their own personal history.<sup>271</sup> These past-focused questions orient the individual to the task of “positively framing” the issue at hand by bringing to mind positive stories from their own life experiences. These questions also “ask people to ‘step into someone else’s shoes’” as part of the exploratory process.<sup>272</sup> As such, they are in many ways an exercise that encourages of Ardentian “Visiting” based on their own history and life experiences.

My stage setting questions included:

- 1) *Describe a time when you were part of a diverse team/group which really benefited from its diversity. How did you learn about each other’s unique gifts and differences? What was special about what this group achieved?*
- 2) *Tell me about a time you had a wonderful working relationship with someone of a different political stripe from yourself. What was the high point of this relationship? What did you learn from this relationship?*
- 3) *Tell me about a time when you had a “moment of breakthrough” and came to understand or respect someone you initially had been critical towards. What triggered those feelings?*

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<sup>270</sup> Cooperrider and Whitney, *Appreciative Inquiry: A Positive Revolution in Change*, 16.

<sup>271</sup> Whitney, Cooperrider, and Trosten-Bloom, *Encyclopedia of Positive Questions: Using Appreciative Inquiry*, 67.

<sup>272</sup> Whitney, Cooperrider, and Trosten-Bloom, *Encyclopedia of Positive Questions: Using Appreciative Inquiry*, 69.



The second round of questions is geared towards “making sense” of these previously elicited experiences, in light of one’s own identity and personal qualities. They provide an opportunity for self-reflective introspection as well as for creative imagining. I also included a broad question designed to ask about their religious or spiritual beliefs. This was purposely left open so that it could include individuals who see themselves as a more secular. Based on both Andrew Lewis et. al.’s work as well as my first survey, I did not want to alienate the participants who identify as ‘nones’ or Atheists.<sup>273</sup>

Questions here included:

- 1) Suppose we were to incorporate the best element(s) from the stories you described above into our broader political atmosphere. What would we do the same, do more of, or do differently if everyone were to live by that wisdom?*
- 2) What do you value most about yourself that contributes positively in social situations where there may be conflict or disagreement?*
- 3) In the responses above, do your answers draw upon any spiritual or religious values? If they do, can you describe them?*

The third part of an interview is a “vision setting” exercise. Concluding questions provide an opportunity to summarize the themes discussed in earlier questions, and to place the learnings from the interviewee’s positive history into a future vision. The aim here is to “fully engage one’s creative imagination” in the task of picturing positive paths forward. Whitney et.

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<sup>273</sup> Lewis, Andrew. et al., “The (Non) Religion of Mechanical Turk Workers,” *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion* 54, no. 2 (2015): 419–428.



al. write, “This more creative intelligence is often more capable of generating positive possibilities than the part of the brain rooted in concrete analysis.”<sup>274</sup>

It is here that Appreciative Inquiry most blends into Mannheim’s conception of Utopic Thinking. In *Man and Society* he argues, “utopia...has the courage to regard that which does not exist or which hardly exists in our society as possible in a society which has a different type of organization... it seeks to direct given facts—including psychological ones—in such a way that new facts will come into being in place of those now existing.”<sup>275</sup> This echoes Cooperrider and Whitney, when they describe the value of such envisioning – “the future begins to be discerned in the form of visible patterns interwoven into the texture of the actual. The amplified interaction among innovators and innovations makes something important happen: very rapidly we start seeing outlines of the New World.”<sup>276</sup>

Some Appreciative Inquiry programs take these visions, and move a step further into a “design” phase, where participants also develop an action plan of how they can actualize these dreams.<sup>277</sup> This added phase was unrealistic given both the method used for data collection and for the timeline of this project. However, in the final chapter I will return to this topic to describe how such a project might be implemented to positive effect.

My vision setting questions included:

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<sup>274</sup> Whitney, Cooperrider, and Trosten-Bloom, *Encyclopedia of Positive Questions: Using Appreciative Inquiry*, 69.

<sup>275</sup> Mannheim, *Man and Society In an Age of Reconstruction: Studies in Modern Social Structure With a Bibliographical Guide to the Study of Modern Society*, 200.

<sup>276</sup> Whitney and Cooperrider, *Appreciative Inquiry: A Positive Revolution in Change*, 9.

<sup>277</sup> Whitney and Cooperrider, *Appreciative Inquiry: A Positive Revolution in Change*, 10-12.



- 1) *Imagine that it is 20 years in the future. To your surprise, the nation has reached a new level of peace between its different conflicting factions. What is different? What is happening that lets you know it is different?*
- 2) *If you had three wishes to make such a future come true, what are they?*
- 3) *Do you have any particular feelings or additional thoughts you'd like to share?*  
*(optional).*

In addition, I collected a series of demographic responses that allowed me to trace basic details about participants, as well as their political and religious viewpoints. For a full list of questions, see Appendix E in the back of this dissertation.

My analysis will now turn to the results of my surveys and the interpretation of my findings. Chapter 5 summarizes the data that was collected during the interview process and describes the coding schema that came from my results. Chapter 6 will go into more depth in regards to responses, and demonstrate ways that a Utopia informed by political pluralism might be encouraged among the American public.



## **Chapter 5: Description and Intrepretation of Survey Findings**

This chapter is divided between the two surveys that were conducted as part of my research in 2017 and 2018 respectively. The 2017 survey's qualitative answers led me to a new series of research questions about Exclusivism/Inclusivism/Pluralism in the public arena. My 2018 survey was thus something of a second step in the research process. Both surveys also contain a large amount of statistical information that will not be used for this dissertation but were included to maximize the utility of the survey, and for future expansion of the project.

### **SURVEY#1**

Following approval from Claremont School of Theology's Institutional Review Board process, I opened my survey to Turkers on October 15, 2017. By December 15<sup>th</sup>, 2017 I had collected 850 respondents, which I judged to be a sufficient amount for the project's needs. Survey respondents were offered \$1.50. Amazon charges a fee per survey used, bringing the total per survey up to \$2.10. Funds were paid out of pocket and totaled \$1,785.00. Of these 850, there were 716 individuals who passed two "attention checks" that were placed in the survey. Individuals were allowed to bypass any question they felt uncomfortable sharing, so in the summaries below the total numbers of participants may vary slightly.

As hoped, the survey provided a broad sample of the American populace. In respect to race and ethnicity, survey respondents included a larger number of minorities than expected, beating the U.S. average. The most recent U.S. census reported 60.7% of individuals as being



white, while only 52.52% of respondents were Caucasian Non-Hispanic. All minority groupings were slightly overrepresented.<sup>278</sup>

*Q7 - How do you identify your race/ethnicity*

#	Answer	%	Count	2017 Census
1	White	52.52%	375	60.7%
2	Black or African American	20.31%	145	13.4%
3	American Indian or Alaska Native	1.68%	12	1.3%
4	Asian	12.89%	92	5.8%
5	Native Hawaiian or Pacific Islander	0.28%	2	0.2%
6	Other	1.12%	8	2.7%
7	Hispanic or Latino/a	10.64%	76	18.1%
8	Middle Eastern/North African	0.56%	4	N/A*
	Total	100%	714	
	*Not included in the U.S. Census.			

In respect to gender, this survey did result in a significant amount of men choosing to participate. They were overrepresented in the survey by 10.1% versus the broader American public. The reasons for this are unknown. I could find no literature that listed this as a ‘typical’ finding in MTurk studies. Indeed, research by Djellel Difallah et. al. has shown that women make up a majority of MTurk workers (55.8%) in the U.S.<sup>279</sup> For comparison, the second survey actually had an overrepresentation of women, 57.4%. This will be discussed more in the following section. One possibility is that the “advertisement” used to solicit workers on the MTurk site

<sup>278</sup> Figures from U.S. Census Bureau. Accessed December 29, 2018.

<https://web.archive.org/save/https://www.census.gov/quickfacts/fact/table/US/PST120218>

<sup>279</sup> Djellel Difallah, Elena Filatova, and Panos Ipeirotis, “Demographics and Dynamics of Mechanical Turk Workers” (Proceedings of *WSDM 2018: The Eleventh ACM International Conference on Web Search and Data Mining*, Marina Del Rey, CA, USA, February 5–9, 2018), 5.

<https://web.archive.org/web/20181230000929/http://www.ipeirotis.com/wp-content/uploads/2017/12/wsdmf074-difallahA.pdf>



(“Participate in a Study on Politics and Religious Belief”) was somehow more attractive to males.

<i>Q4 - What is your sex?</i>				
#	Answer	%	Count	2017 U.S. Census
1	Male	59.38%	418	49.2%
2	Female	40.34%	284	50.8%
3	Other	0.28%	2	N/A*
	Total	100%	704	
	*Not included in the U.S. Census.			

In any case, given the large sample size (I still had 284 women participate) and the intended goal of the study as a theory-building exercise, I do not believe this male-skew detracted from the overall goals of this dissertation project.

As with many other MTurk studies, there was a general preference towards liberalism in the sample population. Both John Ross et. al. and Adam Berinsky, et. al.<sup>280</sup> found a higher number of self-identified liberals in their works. This was to be expected in the sample. The above studies did not show that liberals/conservatives in MTurk studies behaved differently than participants in other methods, so again, I do not expect this disparity to affect my overall theorizing.

<i>Q14 - How do you rate yourself on the political spectrum?</i>			
#	Answer	%	Count
1	Very Conservative	6.86%	49
2	Conservative	20.45%	146
3	Middle of the Road	27.17%	194
4	Liberal	30.53%	218

<sup>280</sup> Adam Berinsky, et al., “Using Mechanical Turk as a Subject Recruitment Tool for Experimental Research,” 892-912.



5	Very Liberal	14.99%	107
	Total	100%	714

Also consistent with both the Ross and Berinsky studies was the tendency for participants to be young and relatively low-income. There were only six respondents who reported being 65+. In a future work it might be interesting to specifically target older individuals to see if/how their views of diversity and the future differ from the younger participants. However, this may necessitate another methodology, as has relatively few MTurk workers are of that age demographic.

*Q5 - What is your age?*

#	Answer	%	Count
1	18-24 years old	12.34%	88
2	25-34 years old	53.16%	379
3	35-44 years old	23.98%	171
4	45-54 years old	6.59%	47
5	55-64 years old	3.09%	22
6	65-74 years old	0.84%	6
7	75 years or older	0.00%	0
	Total	100%	713

Similarly, it may be interesting to compare the results collected here with a sample that is made of higher-income individuals who would demonstrate different class traits. That again would likely require a different method, as those making significant incomes are unlikely to take surveys for \$1.00-\$2.00.

*Q6 - What is your Family's Annual Income*

#	Answer	%	Count
1	Less than \$10,000	5.18%	37
2	\$10,000 - \$19,999	9.10%	65
3	\$20,000 - \$29,999	14.71%	105
4	\$30,000 - \$39,999	14.99%	107



5	\$40,000 - \$49,999	13.59%	97
6	\$50,000 - \$59,999	11.62%	83
7	\$60,000 - \$69,999	7.84%	56
8	\$70,000 - \$79,999	7.00%	50
9	\$80,000 - \$89,999	5.04%	36
10	\$90,000 - \$99,999	3.50%	25
11	\$100,000 - \$149,999	4.76%	34
12	More than \$150,000	2.66%	19
	Total	100%	714

Also of relevance is the overall religiosity of the sample group. As was to be expected in a large American sample, a majority of the respondents reported being some form of Christian (Evangelical, Mainline Protestant, Catholic). The survey also followed in the footsteps of Andrew Lewis et. al.'s "The (Non) Religion of Mechanical Turk Workers" in the *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion*, which found a disproportionate number of self-identified Atheist/Agnostics and Nones vs. the wider population.<sup>281</sup> Results from a recent Pew Research Center report are included here for reference.<sup>282</sup>

*Q16 - Do you self-identify as:*

#	Answer	%	Count	Pew Forum
1	Evangelical Christian	16.24%	115	25.4%
2	Mainline Protestant Christian	21.33%	151	14.7%
3	Catholic	20.06%	142	20.8%
4	Mormon	1.13%	8	1.7%
5	Jewish	1.55%	11	1.7%

<sup>281</sup> Andrew Lewis et al., "The (Non) Religion of Mechanical Turk Workers," 419–428.

<sup>282</sup> "America's Changing Religious Landscape: Christians Decline Sharply as Share of Population, Unaffiliated and Other Faiths Continue to Grow," *Pew Research Center*, May 12, 2015, [https://web.archive.org/web/20181230030008/http://www.pewforum.org/2015/05/12/americas-changing-religious-landscape/pf\\_15-05-05\\_rls2\\_1\\_310px/](https://web.archive.org/web/20181230030008/http://www.pewforum.org/2015/05/12/americas-changing-religious-landscape/pf_15-05-05_rls2_1_310px/)



6	Muslim	1.27%	9	0.4%
7	Atheist/Agnostic	24.58%	174	4.0%
8	Buddhist	1.27%	9	0.7%
9	Hindu	1.27%	9	0.4%
10	None	11.30%	80	12.1%
	Total	100%	708	

In this survey, as well as in my second, it is important to note the relatively limited number of Non-Christian participants. Members of minority religious traditions totaled only 46 respondents, or 6.49% of the overall sample. Although there will be information drawn from these participants in the following chapter, the overall small numbers indicate that one should use caution when making wider inference about members of these traditions in the wider society.

A promising avenue of future research would be to conduct these two studies again, this time specifically targeting members of other traditions utilizing the Mechanical Turk software. This would allow for sufficient responses to draw statistical inference and to gain a fuller picture of how the responses of minority traditions may differ from those of Christian populations.

For my analysis above I have limited the conversation to statistics most relevant to the conversation at hand. A fuller summary of descriptive data from the study is available in Appendix C. This includes summary statistics on many of the questions that were asked at the survey.

## CODING SCHEMA – SURVEY #1 QUALITATIVE QUESTIONS

The narrative aspects of my initial survey resulted in a large amount of data for examination. Even given the relatively small amount written by any one individual (ranging from two sentences to three paragraphs per question), the survey brought in 27,553 words, or just over 110



pages of transcript. One important note here on these results – a significant number of individuals often gave ‘off-topic’ responses and/or refused to fill out one or more of these questions. As such the number of substantive entries here was considerably lower than for other tests (ranging from the 500s – 600s, depending on the question). I attribute this to the short answer questions being placed near the end of the survey proper. Individuals were asked these questions after previously answering 40 multiple choice, and were in a hurry to finish their task. If I do this particular survey again I will either move these questions to the beginning of the survey or randomize the question lists. Realizing the number of drop-offs did lead me to improve my method in the second survey, as I placed the multiple-choice demographic questions last, after they had answered the Appreciative Inquiry questions.

What follows is the coding schema I developed for each core question in the survey.

*1) In your opinion, what is the best way to create positive social change for your community?*

- a. Major Group 1: Focus on Democratic Process (e.g. Voting, Civil Participation, Policy Advocacy).
  - 1. Voting – election of proper officials
  - 2. Policy Advocacy to those in power
- b. Major Group 2: Extra-Government Advocacy (Community Organizing, Volunteering, etc.)
  - 1. Community Organizing – National issues
  - 2. Community Organizing – Local issues
  - 3. Volunteering with Advocacy Groups
  - 4. Extra-Governmental Negotiations with Other Side



- c. Major Group 3: Self-Focused: (Self Reflection, Open-Mindedness, Non-Judgement, etc.)
  - 1. “Be the Change” – Focus on personal development as path to change.
  - 2. Dialogue – Active listening, question-asking, etc.
- d. Major Group 4: Cynics and Extremists
  - 1. Radical Standpoint – Revolution (including violence)
  - 2. Cynics – Change is impossible.
- e. Other/Misc.

*2) Think of a group that makes you uncomfortable (this could mean someone of a different race, political affiliation, or religion). What, if anything, would make you more comfortable working with them on a project you both believe in?*

- f. Major Group 1: “Sympathetic Visiting” (Pluralist Responses)
  - 1. Focus on Similarities
  - 2. Focus on Building Relationships
  - 3. Focus on Listening/Non-Judgement
- g. Major Group 2: Mutual Self-Interest: Framed as mutual benefit, or compromise during conflicts. (Inclusivist Responses)
  - 1. Explicit Self-Interest/Hard Negotiation for Gain
  - 2. Compromise as Forgotten Virtue
- h. Major Group 3: Exclusivist: Reject both of the previous options. Many answers devolve into Ad Hominem attacks.
  - 1. “Believe what I Believe” Reject Otherness as Heresy



2. Personal Attack – Insensitive/Hateful Comments toward the Opposition

3. Cynic – Refuse to Associate with Other

i. Other/Misc.

*3) What are the top factors that hold you back from engaging more in politics?*

j. Group 1: Busy or lack of interest.

1. Not enough time.

2. Never liked politics.

k. Group 2: Fear-Based (fear of judgement, safety concerns, fear of confrontation)

1. Fear of Physical Violence/Reprisal

2. Fear of Social Judgement

3. Fear of Argument/Confrontation

l. Group 3: Cynicism – Lack of belief in personal agency, lack of confidence in knowledge of system, etc.

1. Not an Expert – Wish to know more about issues before proceeding.

2. Cash Issues – Can't make a difference without large funds.

3. Cynic – Things will never change.

m. Group 4: I'm already involved!

For the purposes of this paper I will draw most frequently from the second of these questions, which most directly elicited responses relating to engagement with someone perceived as an 'Other.' However, a numerous points in the following chapter I will pull themes and correlations with the other two questions as they connect to individuals who identify as Exclusivist/Inclusivist/Pluralist.



Overall, this question was broadly evenly divided between Pluralist, Inclusivist, Exclusivist responses.

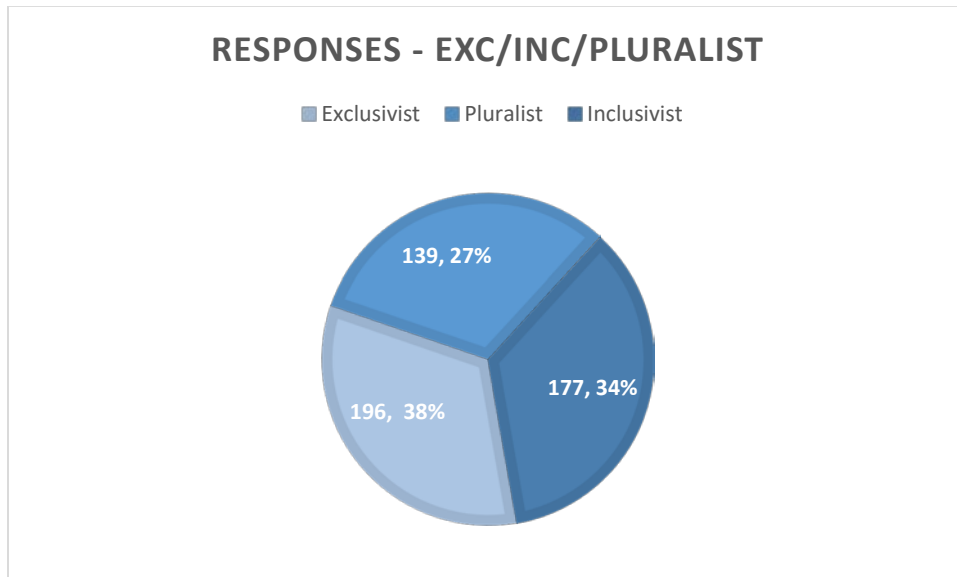


Figure 11 - Response Types by Ideology

Exclusivist responses were the most likely, making up 38% of the overall share. This ranged from viewpoints giving answers that either reject the possibility of working together (Isolationist Exclusivism) i.e.

*“There can be no middle ground, we are locked in conflict. Engaging seems like a waste of time and energy.”*

*“There wouldn't be anything that I would be willing to work with them with.”*

*“LGBT makes me uncomfortable. Nothing can change that because its morally wrong”<sup>283</sup>*

Or alternately suggesting a ‘conversion experience’ (Proselytization based Exclusivism)

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<sup>283</sup> Any quotations from my survey are unedited in respect to content. However, spelling and grammatical mistakes are corrected for ease of reading except in instances where I was unsure of the intended meaning of the response.



*“I wouldn’t work with Republicans...unless, of course, they admitted what a mistake it was to put the current occupant of the White House into office and were willing to work on getting him OUT to get more SANE candidates.”*

*“I am uncomfortable with people who don't speak my language. I'd feel better if we spoke the same one.”*

*“If they were willing to renounce their beliefs and realize that the U.S. needs secure borders.”*

In the extremes, Exclusivist comments turned toward the violent/paranoid or engaged in *ad hominem* attacks:

*“I would never work with those racist GOP assholes. They just need to go away.”*

*“People today are hateful and will physically hurt you now if you are not a liberal.”*

*“What we need is a revolution to overthrow the liberal media and the Democrat dominated Washington. If Trump needs me I’ll be there.”*

This last quote is also telling, in that it runs very close to a Fundamentalist narrative – the individual clearly believes there is a cabal of liberal democrats in control, despite the fact that at the time of this survey Republicans controlled all houses of congress as well as the presidency. They have a hero (Trump) whose efforts are seen as ‘overthrowing’ a corrupt and powerful regime. This style of narrative is close to a full-on Satanization model in its degree of paranoia.

The Inclusivist responses can also be broken down by degree of openness. On the one side, there are genuinely open individuals who discuss positive shared values and means for attaining or upholding a social good –

*“I am a very conservative person, and am usually made uncomfortable by feminists. But if I think on it maybe we could work together on something we both believe in, like domestic violence preventions.”*

*“Gay and Lesbians: I would work with them on their rights because I believe in America and while I disagree with their lifestyle they still have rights.”*



Other Inclusivists expect there to be conflicts of values, but accept that working together and when necessary making compromises allows for productive associations. These Inclusivists tend more towards the “Limited replacement” style of interactions. They allow for a surprising range of compromises, but still generally hold the opposing side at arm’s length.

*“Pro-life supporters make me a bit anxious as I think that they are basically taking away women’s rights. I think that I would be willing to compromise on when abortion should be allowed and not allowed. I would be willing to work with them to make abortion not something that one should not take lightly.”*

*“If we can manage to remain civil and polite, I would be very willing to compromise to find reasonable ground on the issue...don’t expect me to be their friend, however.”*

Pluralists go the furthest in their desire to know the Other, and show the most optimistic attitudes about our ability to interact with our political opponents. They also frequently expressed empathy as part of their process:

*“Learn and understand what the community wants and needs. Then go out and participate.”*

*“Treat everyone with respect despite how different each other may be. Learn to accept others instead of putting them down because you are unfamiliar.”*

*“I used to feel very uncomfortable around gays and lesbians. It took a long time for me to let go of my preconceptions about them. Now I have gotten to know several, and I see the world very differently.”*

## SURVEY #2

Following approval from Claremont School of Theology’s Institutional Review Board process, I opened my second survey to Turkers on September 6, 2018. Since this survey was



querying fewer individuals, I was able to finish the collection much faster. By September 9<sup>th</sup>, 2018 my second survey collected 162 responses, of which 150 were kept for processing. As the questions were primarily short-answer, I did not include an ‘attention check’ as a part of this survey. However, I did review respondent’s answers as they came in, and removed participants who did not fully engage with the survey (i.e. Turkers who copied/pasted random text into the text boxes etc.). In the intervening time between administering my first and second surveys, I also discovered a feature of MTurk that allows you to customize the needed number of ‘accepted’ surveys, enabling me to finish the process with a full usable 150 surveys for reflection and coding.

Survey respondents were offered \$2.50 per survey in this go around. I found that that added amount encouraged respondents to write quality answers in their boxes, and made them in less of a rush to complete the process. Amazon charges a fee per survey used, bringing the total per survey up to \$3.10. Funds were paid out of pocket and totaled \$465.00. Again, individuals were allowed to bypass any question they felt uncomfortable sharing, so in the data below the total numbers of participants may vary slightly.

In respect to sexual identity, this survey skewed in the opposite direction of the first study that I conducted, with 57.43% of respondents being female. While still comparatively off from wider American demographics, this study was actually closer to Mturk’s proportions of female Turkers.

*Q11 - What is your sex?*

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#	Answer	%	Count	U.S. Census	MTurk <sup>284</sup>
1	Male	42.57%	63	49.2%	44.1%
2	Female	57.43%	85	50.8%	55.8%
3	Other	0.00%	0	n/a*	n/a*
	Total	100%	148		
*Not included in the U.S. Census/Mturk Study					

In respect to race, this survey again over represents minorities, this time to an even greater degree. However, for this and for many of the following categories, it warrants warning that with the smaller sample size of this survey irregularities are more likely.

*Q14 - How do you identify your race/ethnicity?*

#	Answer	%	Count	U.S. Census
1	White	50.67%	76	60.7%
2	Black or African American	18.67%	28	13.4%
3	American Indian or Alaska Native	4.00%	6	1.3%
4	Asian	17.33%	26	5.8%
5	Native Hawaiian or Pacific Islander	0.00%	0	0.2%
6	Other	3.33%	5	2.7%
7	Hispanic or Latino/a	6.00%	9	18.1%
8	Middle Eastern/North African	0.00%	0	n/a*
	Total	100%	150	
*Not included in the U.S. Census.				

<sup>284</sup>Difallah, Filatova, and Ipeirotis, "Demographics and Dynamics of Mechanical Turk Workers," 6.



Religious self-identification was again weighted towards Atheists/Agnostics, with an under representation of Christians, particularly Evangelicals. This correlates with a similar under representation of ideological conservatives.

*Q20 - Do you self-identify as:*

#	Answer	%	Count	Pew Forum
1	Evangelical Christian	20.00%	30	25.4%
2	Mainline Protestant Christian	16.67%	25	14.7%
3	Catholic	20.00%	30	20.8%
4	Mormon	1.33%	2	1.7%
5	Jewish	3.33%	5	1.7%
6	Muslim	2.00%	3	0.4%
7	Atheist/Agnostic	15.33%	23	4.0%
8	Buddhist	2.00%	3	0.7%
9	Hindu	6.00%	9	0.4%
10	None	13.33%	20	12.1%
	Total	100%	150	

Once again, I add the caveat that one ought to be careful drawing inference from the relatively limited number of Non-Christian participants. In future research this same survey could again be used with specific targets for members of each tradition (for example, 150 Muslims, 150 Buddhists etc). This would allow for reaching “saturation” of answers for these communities, and be of much greater worth in analyzing how my concepts of Political Exclusivism/Inclusivism/Pluralism may be reflected in these communities. It would also allow for broader analysis that may be of use to other fields, such as that of Interfaith Dialogue.



Annual income again leaned towards the lower end of the socioeconomic spectrum, with a curious outlier of individuals in the \$100,000 - \$149,000 category. I assume for this is primarily an effect of the small sample size. The age of participants was also again more youthful, as is consistent with my other survey and the wider literature.

*Q13 - What is your Family's Annual Income*

#	Answer	%	Count
1	Less than \$10,000	3.33%	5
2	\$10,000 - \$19,999	9.33%	14
3	\$20,000 - \$29,999	14.67%	22
4	\$30,000 - \$39,999	14.00%	21
5	\$40,000 - \$49,999	15.33%	23
6	\$50,000 - \$59,999	14.00%	21
7	\$60,000 - \$69,999	6.00%	9
8	\$70,000 - \$79,999	6.00%	9
9	\$80,000 - \$89,999	2.00%	3
10	\$90,000 - \$99,999	4.00%	6
11	\$100,000 - \$149,999	8.67%	13
12	More than \$150,000	2.67%	4
	Total	100%	150

*Q12 - What is your age?*

Answer	%	Count
18-24 years old	5.33%	8
25-34 years old	50.00%	75
35-44 years old	28.67%	43
45-54 years old	10.00%	15
55-64 years old	4.67%	7
65-74 years old	1.33%	2
75 years or older	0.00%	0
Total	100%	150



The second survey also saw a dramatic decrease in Exclusivist responses. I believe this is in large part due to the nature of the questions themselves. The questions in the survey are designed to elicit optimistic emotions and positive storytelling on the part of recipients. As such, Appreciative Inquiry is often treated as an “intervention” more so than as a traditional ‘neutral’ study.<sup>285</sup>

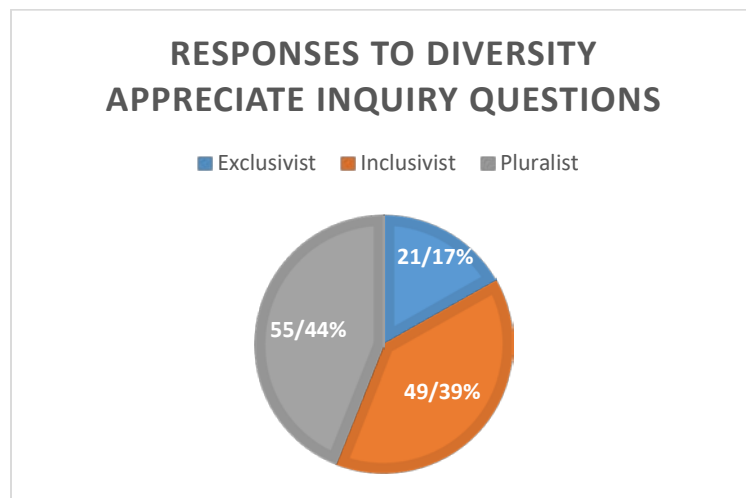


Figure 12 - Responses to Diversity 2018 Survey

Responses mirrored my established variations of Exclusivism/Inclusivism/Pluralism quite well. Within the framework of political Exclusivists, responses ranged from isolationist to militant. For example, one respondent below both came from an isolated setting and wished to remain there. Another expressed absolute disinterest about meeting those of a different political affiliation:

*“I grew up in a town of very little diversity and avoid teams as often as I can. The most diverse team I’ve been in is a choir where the diversity is in the vocal ranges.....I would*

<sup>285</sup> A promising avenue for future research here would be to develop a controlled experiment where individuals are tested for Exclusivism/Inclusivism/Pluralism, then taken through Appreciative Inquiry programming. The change in the openness of their responses could be measured, or tied to behaviors such as voting. For more on possible developments please see the end of Chapter 6.



*never have a wonderful working relationship with someone who has significantly different political views than me.”*

*“I am not sure why I would WANT to get to know one of those people [conservatives]. I have no desire to hear their bullshit viewpoints or justifications for their behavior.”*

On the other end of the Exclusivist spectrum were the militants:

*“I worked with a guy named Larry, who was my boss, and a conservative Republican. I learned I was right, most of them are lazy and have a sense of entitlement, and a view that everyone else is to be somehow looked down on, even when they exhibit the same flaws.”*

*“When I was on Facebook I used to joke about needing a “proceed with caution” disclaimer by my profile pic.....this man will verbally destroy you, you stand no chance.....God Bless Donald J. Trump.”*

Exclusivism also expressed itself in a Utopic vision marked by the triumph of one viewpoint over its competitors:

*“There has been a nationwide Christian revival where the values and standards of God's Word have been accepted with enthusiasm among a large part of our population. We would overthrow Roe v Wade to defend the unborn and always support our troops.”*

*“The GOP goes away. Their horrible bigoted viewpoints disappear, and the rest of the country can progress like it is supposed to.”*

*“It is different from now because if all people in the nation meditate daily, the productivity will improve and division in our minds will vanish. I dream a country with a high values and high productivity.”*

Inclusivists would frame their arguments either as a broad aura of tolerance, or through a focus on negotiation and compromise:

*“The only way this peace can be achieved is through tolerance. We will never actually be at a level of peace where everyone believes the same thing, so you must allow people to live and let live.”*



*“I look forward to the return of civil conversation and compromise. There are a lot of things that republicans believe that I don’t, but getting some of what we want is better than being at each other’s throats.”*

Pluralists would express their views through a focus on the positive aspects of diversity and humble presumptions about the power of any one individual or group to understand truth.

*“I envision a future where is constant education about differences in people and how they aren't a bad thing. Official institutions would open their gates to people of different cultures without prejudice or limitations.”*

*“[Creating an ideal future] is not up to me. I don't have the answers for anyone. What I do works for me. I wouldn't want to impose anything on anyone...It takes a community to make a future together.”*

*“Empathy and Introspection need to become a more pronounced feature in our society. Empathy is the cornerstone of human cooperation, and allows us to see one another as humans not things.*

## CODING SCHEMA – SURVEY #2

The second survey included ten qualitative questions instead of three and was framed in a format that encouraged longer answers. As such it provided a considerably deeper and more diverse set of responses than my first study. Respondents from this survey provided 175 pages and 42,991 words of responses. For the purposes of this project I am going to focus on a few subsets of the overall data collected. However, there it is important to note that there is considerably more data available for further analysis.

I developed my coding schema based on the Appreciate Inquiry past/present/future framing.

### **1) Past Experiences**



*Describe a time when you were part of a diverse team which really benefited from its diversity. How did you learn about each other's unique gifts and differences? What was special about what this group achieved?*

*Tell me about a time you had a wonderful working relationship with someone of a different political stripe from yourself. What was the high point of this relationship? What did you learn from this relationship?*

*Tell me about a time when you had a "moment of breakthrough" and came to understand or respect someone you initially had been critical towards. What triggered those feelings?*

a. Social Location of Transformation

- i. Employment
- ii. Educational Setting
- iii. Sports or Recreational Activity
- iv. Religious Community

b. Catalyst of Change

- i. Breakdown of Stereotypes
- ii. Joint Accomplishments
- iii. Failure to Change – (i.e. Exclusivist - reinforced stereotypes etc.)

2) Present Values, Ethics and Religiosity

*Suppose we were to incorporate the best element(s) from the stories you described above into our broader political atmosphere. What would we do the same, do more of, or do differently if everyone were to live by that wisdom?*

*What do you value most about yourself that contributes positively in social situations where there may be conflict or disagreement?*

*In the responses above, do your answers draw upon any spiritual or religious values? If they do, can you describe them?*

a. Practices

- i. Listening, Empathy



- ii. Respect, Withholding Judgement
- iii. Ignoring/Avoiding Faults and Grievances
- iv. Compromise
- v. Conscious Team-Building for Diversity

b. Forms of Belief

- i. Pluralism - Visiting
- ii. Inclusivism – Self-Interest, Compromise
- iii. Exclusivism – Particular

3) Future Utopic Thinking

*Imagine that it is 20 years in the future. To your surprise, the nation has reached a new level of peace between its different conflicting factions. What is different? What is happening that lets you know it is different?*

*If you had three wishes to make such a future come true, what are they?*

- i. Pluralist – Multiple Groups in Peace, Multi-Perspectival Thinking
- ii. Inclusivism – Groups “Tolerate” One Another
- iii. Exclusivism – Eradication of Other, Triumphalist Narrative

The final question asked in the survey was a bit of a catch-all:

*Do you have any particular feelings or additional thoughts you’d like to share? (optional).*

In general, few individuals chose to include added comments. However, there was one major theme elicited here that I believe is worthy of comment: the sheer number of unsolicited positive commentary that the survey received:

*“This was interesting, thank you! We need to make it happen!”*



*“I felt these questions were quite engaging.”*

*“Thank you for allowing me to take this survey. Very very important questions.”*

*“I like this study and please add more studies like this.”*

*“I enjoyed these thoughtful questions.”*

*“Thank you for making me smile and be optimistic, if only for ten minutes.”*

Of the 36 individuals who responded to this question, 29 of them left similar comments to the above.<sup>286</sup> It was a very affirming result to see in the survey materials as it is a common response to Appreciative Inquiry programs, and is regarded by Appreciative Inquiry practitioners as essential to the change process. Jacqueline Kelm writes, “Positive emotion is essential for growth and optimal functioning...large amounts of positive affect, things like hope, excitement, and inspiration....are essential for generating momentum for change.”<sup>287</sup> Cooperrider and Whitney note that over the course of their work with Appreciative Inquiry they often have their research referred to as a “salve” for the toxicity of most everyday conversation. They write that, “in our everyday lives, we are forced constantly into the vocabularies of human deficit. Over the last 30 years these vocabularies have exploded. They are ultimately harmful to both those who ‘suffer’ from the deficit as well as those who place the label.”<sup>288</sup> But when individuals are allowed to focus on the positive aspects of a situation, whole new healing narratives are allowed to surface.

In the final chapter of my dissertation I go into more detail about the data itself, and demonstrate that there is both the possibility of and desire for Political Pluralist thought in the

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<sup>286</sup> The remaining comments included three complaints about writing requirements, two Turkers who thought the survey should have a greater payment, and two off-topic comments.

<sup>287</sup> Kelm, *Appreciative Living*, 97.

<sup>288</sup> Cooperrider and Whitney, *Appreciative Inquiry: A Positive Revolution in Social Change*, 20.



American political environment. I will provide suggested on the best methods for moving forward with such a project, based on the responses from both of the above surveys.



## Chapter 6: Moving Forward - Towards Political Pluralism

This chapter will focus on the greater implications and actionable outcomes from my two surveys. It will also go into more detail about where we find Exclusivism vs. Inclusivism and Pluralism in the public sphere. Ultimately I argue that, contrary to the narratives of popular media, Political Pluralism does exist in our society. I identify several social locations where Pluralist conversation and learning is likely to occur (most notably work, educational settings, and recreational events), and argue that careful attention should be given to how to expand these Pluralist narratives in the public sphere. I also consider my data from an intersectional perspective, and demonstrate how the contributions of women and minorities differ from those of men, particularly white men. Finally, I will also tie my findings back into existing literature, particularly findings from Robert Putnam and Hannah Arendt.

### VISITING AND THE EFFECTS OF DIALOGUE

To begin my analysis, I would like to highlight the sheer number of stories that these narratives raised that reflect Ardentian Visiting. As was shown in the previous chapter, the Appreciate Inquiry questions elicited a strong Pluralist response from participants. Embedded in these narratives were a number of positive virtues and practices. These echo those used in Interfaith Dialogue quite well. To begin, here is a sampling of quotes that demonstrate Ardentian Visiting in a number of contexts:

*“I worked in a classroom with a teacher who identified as Republican. I am an Independent. When she gave her lecture on 9/11 to the students I was able to see her viewpoints through a more patriotic lens. Her father immigrated from Thailand and she loves America in a way that was at times difficult for me to feel being a descendent of slaves.”*



*“I was a strict vegetarian, liberal, Jewish, lesbian. He was a self-described redneck, hunter and I suspected a former white supremacist. We worked surprisingly well together in the store. One night we had to stay late and watch the cleaning crew and I surprised him by knowing all the words to a bunch of Johnny Cash songs. We sang a duet of "Jackson" together and laughed. Then we talked about our lives and stuff. Then I bluntly asked if he was ever a Nazi. He said yes, he had been. But with working with people like me and others he learned that people are just people no matter what color, ethnicity, sexual preference, etc. He said he had been taught to hate others who were different from a young age, but when he got older and got to know other people outside his "tribe" he realized it was just fear of the unknown. I think I learned that people can really change on a fundamental level and that if we all were able to meet each other and see each other as fundamentally the same, the whole world would get over this bigotry stuff and just accept and embrace our differences”*

*“The biggest split of politics happen when I finally met up with an old bestie from high school. During our separate university journeys our politics have shifted in to different niches. I am now getting closer to republican, while she is staunchly a liberal democrat. The last time we met she shared many of her beliefs and I think I'm starting to understand why democrats think the way they do. I am happy that we are able to talk frankly about things that matter.”*

*“I have liberal friends who like to rave like a maniac about Trump. I tend to let them rant on out of respect...and still our discussions on government or foreign policy have challenged my biases and perceptions. It also challenges me to frame my beliefs in ways that help them understand me too.”*

*“My good friend is a republican we got along great. We shared jokes about each other's parties and in general. We looked out for each other. She helped me to understand that side of things, and I help her understand mine....But we never stop seeing each other for who we are...”*

These moments of mutual empathy result in a wide range of positive responses on the part of participants. These include greater mutual respect...

*“A while ago a coworker and I had a political disagreement. I remember about a week after that conversation happened, he invited me to go get a drink at a bar after our shift was over. I felt like he was extending an olive branch. I took advantage of that and we always had respect for each other. I have learned that we can have a lot of differences but it doesn't mean that we can't be friends.”*

*“I had a working relationship with someone who voted for Trump. The high point of the relationship was learning that you can bestow dignity on someone despite having political differences. Nobody's stupid for having different views.”*



...an expanded understanding of the political sphere,

*“I work with a woman that has very different political views than I do. We both have become more understanding of diverging view-points as a result of our friendship. I think that the high point was actually being able to talk intelligently about the Trump-Clinton race and not having anyone get angry about it. This has been very rare.”*

...and introspection on the part of participants,

*“We had a lot of banter back and forth, and he did present some good points that made me take a long look at my views.”*

*“Her father immigrated from Thailand and she loves America in a way that was at times difficult for me to feel being a descendent of slaves.”*

In a number of ways this represents Arendt’s vision of “Visiting.” She writes that “once one is able to perceive the attitudes and emotions of someone else, one becomes intuitively more able to set aside egocentric and private concerns.” This results in an “enlarged mentality” that includes greater respect for the viewpoints of the Other, and an ability to ‘reflect upon our own eccentricities.’ It also allows us, according to Arendt, to make more informed decisions (described by her as “reflexive judgements”) when we make future political choices in the political sphere.<sup>289</sup>

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<sup>289</sup> Hannah Arendt, “Truth and Politics” in *The Portable Hannah Arendt*, ed. Peter Baehr, (New York: Penguin Putman, Inc., 2000), 573.



## JOINT PROJECTS – SITES OF VISITING and BRIDGED SOCIAL CAPITAL

As I noted in chapter 3, joining together to complete mutual projects is a highly recommended exercise by many in the Interfaith and Peacemaking communities. It creates opportunities for the formation of new bridged social capital, and opens space for individuals to develop friendships and mutual respect. When recipients were asked about their positive experiences with diversity, a series of sites came up again and again in their narratives:

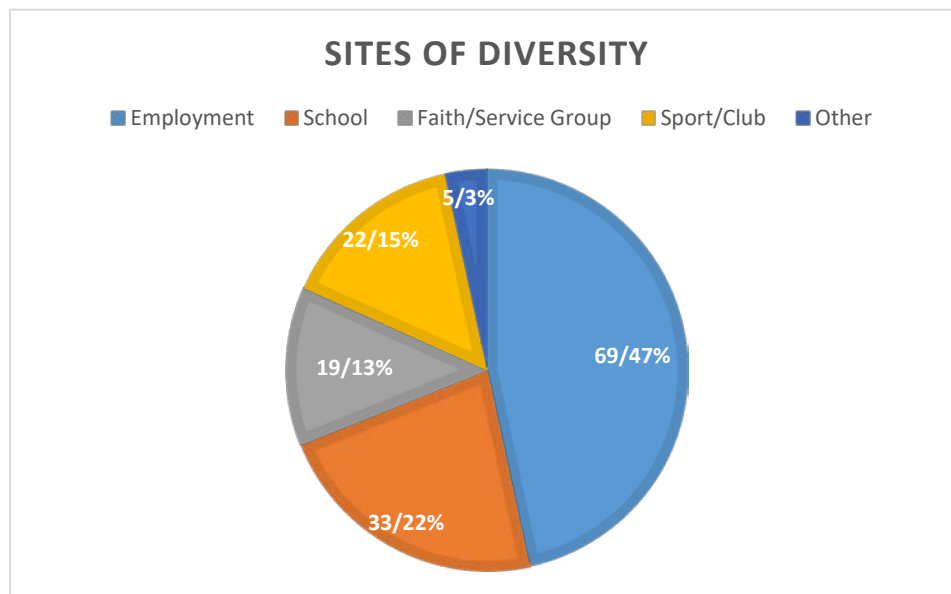


Figure 13 - Sites of Diversity

For example, by far the most common social location presented (69 cases/47%) was one's place of employment:

*"At my work there were 7 men and 8 females. 2 Muslim's, 1 Philippine, 1 Asian, 2 white, 1 Italian, and 8 African American's. There was 1 Atheist, 1 Wiccan, and the rest were various religious beliefs, some for organized religion and some who didn't go to church but still believed. The youngest was 24 and the oldest was 60, we even had a vegan. We were there together for 56 hours a week, and after a while we were like family. Everyone accepted everyone else for who they were."*



*“I had a partner at one of my jobs who was pretty much the opposite of me in every way politically. We found that this actually worked out great for us. We offered a sense of checks and balances with each other that allowed us to question our own beliefs. We were able to each bring something from a different point of view to the table. After a while it reached a point where we understood each other very well.”*

*“I am a republican and a conservative. I had a coworker that was a democrat and he was homosexual. I respected him fully, I never had a problem with him. I even went to his home and met his partner and had dinner. I learned a lot about the democratic party and how they help and reach out to gays and lesbians.”*

*“When I worked at a dry cleaners there were only 2 African Americans including myself. The rest of the workers were Hispanic and the owners were Asian. There were a lot of cultural differences. And a pretty big language barrier. We still treated each other like family.”*

In many ways this finding is quite intuitive. Work sites provide a natural setting where individuals spend long amounts of time together, providing many opportunities for getting to know fellow coworkers quite intimately. It also provides ready-made goals and structured teams that work to carry out shared objectives. As Robert Putnam writes, “the modern workplace encourages collaborative contacts among peers – ideal conditions...for social capital creation.”<sup>290</sup> Regrettably, Putnam also notes that very often workplaces fail to create deeper communities. He found that coworkers account for less than 10 percent of my individuals “close friends.”<sup>291</sup>

Improving workplace relationships was one of the original intentions behind the development of Appreciative Inquiry. David Cooperrider and Suresh Srivastva note that they intended for it to “deepen appreciation for diversity within organizations” as well as “to

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<sup>290</sup> Putnam, *Bowling Alone*, 86.

<sup>291</sup> Putnam, *Bowling Alone*, 87-88.



conceptually reconfigure workplace relationships to be the best of ‘what might be.’”<sup>292</sup> They argue that as a workplace culture becomes more open to diversity, this will in turn encourage further diversification in hiring and promotions etc.<sup>293</sup>

## EDUCATION

Following employment, the second most common reference point for diversity was education, making up 23% of responses.

*“In college, I worked on a large group project with multiple Computer Science students from all kinds of different backgrounds, some of which hardly spoke English. We all had different abilities and were able to work on our group project together, each of us contributing in areas that we excelled in. Even though we came from different cultures, we all worked well together. Many of us still keep in contact.”*

*“I was in a class made up of individuals in other countries. It was a human rights class. One of my group members was from Georgia and suffering from the Russians. It really opened my eyes and made me rethink many of my political viewpoints.”*

These discussions also highlight the importance of diversity being placed directly into classroom pedagogy. Many of the students listed very specific projects centered on diversity that had a memorable impact:

*“When I was in college we had to do an experiment with different cultures and how we lived, ate, interacted. It was interesting to see how we all brought something unique to the project because of how different we were and how special we all were.”*

*“I had a religion class where we described and celebrated the holidays of others. Most of us knew Christmas, but groupmates of mine shared Kwanzaa and Chanukkah. It was a*

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<sup>292</sup> Cooperrider and Srivastva. "Appreciative Inquiry in Organizational Life," *Research in Organizational Change and Development* 1, no. 1 (Winter 1987): 129-169.

<sup>293</sup> Cooperrider and Srivastva, "Appreciative Inquiry in Organizational Life," 167. This is correlated with evidence from other empirical research. For examples see, Michalle Mor Barak, *Managing Diversity: Toward a Globally Inclusive Workplace* (Thousand Oaks: SAGE Publishing, 2011), 59-75.



*good learning experience because we really knew nothing about those 2 holidays. So it was fun to see what they eat, their traditions, their songs, etc.”*

*“I was in a group of 4 at school and each of us had a different background. As a group we had to come up with 4 things that each of us shared and then 4 things that now of shared in common. We had to write a report about all of it. It was very eye opening.”*

These responses show the importance of incorporating diversity into educational formats. In Chapters 1 and 2 I mentioned how many Exclusivists seek to limit exposure to specific types of diversity through controlling curricula. Individuals who receive their education in settings that frown upon diversity of thought lose opportunities to experience the Other. Conversely, these results show that a well-structured diversity class is likely to both be remembered by students and to serve as a catalyst for understanding different viewpoints.

#### SPORTS and SOCIAL GROUPS

*[Sports] “When you join a sports team you are always able to make friends with a large variety of different races and viewpoints. What was special about my football team in high school was just how close we were, my senior class especially. We all really did everything together.”*

*[Scouting] “I was a girl scout leader for my daughter's troop. Meeting with the other leaders, we came from all religions, backgrounds, ethnicities, we shared ideas and crafts, food, traditions, things we could bring back to the girls in our troops. I think what was special, especially for my troop, was the girls were only 6 years old and we were introducing all these new things to them, helping them to understand the differences in the world around them without them being scared by them.*

*“[Video Games] I am on an online game group of people from all over the world with different perspectives and opinions on how to run the guild for the game. We work on dealing with people of all backgrounds from many different cultures to achieve a common goal....after spending time together, you develop a family attitude. It helps to make good decisions and we are number one on our server now.”*

Social activities are another rather intuitive social location for diversity experiences to happen. These too were described by Robert Putnam in *Bowling Alone*. Here again is an activity



that “lends itself well to the creation of relationships and thus social capital.” However, this too faces challenges in our modern society. Broadly speaking participation in most sports clubs has been decreasing per capita for several years. This is at least partially attributed to the decline in Physical Education classes in schools (another lost opportunity for educators) as well as funding in many municipalities for community leagues.<sup>294</sup> Here too we also face the challenge of sorting. If the leagues that do exist are highly homogenous, this limits the possibility of these experiences creating bridged social capital. Instead, if anything they create bonded social capital within a group that is singular in their class, race, and political biases.

This being said, there are a number of different formats today that allow creative possibilities for pluralistic communication. One, as mentioned in my third example above, is through games played online. Many “massive multiplayer” online games involve large teams (often 20-40 individuals) working in tandem to accomplish tasks. Although controversial in some circles for the virtual nature of the interaction, games such as these allow players to interact with individuals from dramatically different cultures, often from around the globe.<sup>295</sup>

## SERVING THE COMMUNITY – FAITH AND COMMUNITY GROUPS

A large number of individuals experienced diversity by coming together to solve community problems, especially in the care for the less fortunate:

*“I worked with a woman last year when we were both volunteering for a fundraiser for our town's food pantry. We had to come up with ways that were new to try to raise money as the pantry had many more people in need to provide food for. She was very conservative but still deeply cared about helping people. We had different ways to go*

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<sup>294</sup> Putnam, *Bowling Alone*, 110.

<sup>295</sup> For more on the positive aspects of gaming community see: Celia Pearce, *Communities of Play: Emergent Cultures in Multiplayer Games and Virtual Worlds* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 2015); Frans Mayra, *An Introduction to Game Studies* (Thousand Oaks: SAGE Publishing, 2014).



*about the task, but I appreciated her opinions about what the government should do and what individuals should do.”*

*“We started a volunteer group to help people who needed it in our small community. We called ourselves the River Rats and we held dances, benefits, auctions in this old, unused hay barn to raise money for people in need of operations, even raised money for the MD Telethon. The people who volunteered were all kinds; black, white, Hispanic, cowboy, Indian, lefty, righty, etc. We were able to bring in live bands who played Country, Rock and even a Mariachi/Ranchera band. We learned that we all had common goals for our community and we were able to enjoy and celebrate our differences. Plus we raised a lot of money for people who desperately needed it.”*

In one case, service in diversity came through experience of a national disaster and the needs that arose during the crisis:

*“During flood disaster in our state, I went to most flood effected areas. There were many people from different places involved in flood relief works in camps of people who lost their houses and materials. We prepared food for them, distributed clothes to wear. We went to their homes to clean their houses by removing mud left, after river went back after flood. Many political party members worked together including me. I learned many things during those days. I think if we continue working for the entire world, with this unity, the world would be a better place to live.”*

I was also surprised to find faith communities mentioned quite often in the responses as a common location of diversity experience. This is somewhat intriguing, given the number of highly secular individuals who participated in the study as well as the general academic attitude that faith groups typically lack for diversity. However, when faith communities were mentioned, they too were virtually always described in the context of joint service:

*“I was a volunteer at a church. I volunteered in the clothing closet. The group I worked with was very diverse. We had a Vietnamese volunteer, a Hispanic volunteer and a Nigerian volunteer. I am African American. I think the community benefitted from the diversity because each woman brought her own style and creativity in to picking out the best clothing for people in the community.”*



*“The church I attended has a variety of different races present. We work well together in reaching the community around us. Being that we all come from different walks of life, we are able to relate to those we come in contact with. We talked about each other's gifts, talents, and views on the issues of today. This group is special because our diversity allows the community we serve to be comfortable interacting with us.”*

*I'm part of a diverse team in my local church women's group. We all have different backgrounds and status. We all have different careers. Several of us are from different countries. It's great because everyone has something to bring to the table. We can come up with a lot of great unique ideas because we have so many different perspectives. We volunteer in the community frequently, and we all get along very well.”*

These responses reflect what many in the interfaith community have felt called to do together. As Paul Knitter writes, “A growing number of people from all religious communities find themselves called to do something about the immense amount of unnecessary suffering that afflicts so many human and other sentient beings.”<sup>296</sup> This leads him to argue that there is an “Ethical Bridge” between traditions. This bridge joins individuals together “through concern for ‘worldly’ matters” that then can be the springboard for further dialogue and friendship. Here we see the same affect happening between individuals of different political stripes, as they rise to address joint problems in their community.<sup>297</sup>

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<sup>296</sup> Paul Knitter, “Is the Pluralist Model a Western Imposition,” in *The Myth of Religious Superiority*, ed. Paul Knitter (Maryknoll: Orbis Books, 2005), 40-41.

<sup>297</sup> Knitter, *Theologies of Religions*, 139.



## SOCIAL MEDIA

There was however, one social space that participants did NOT believe was conducive to pluralism: social media. This ‘online space’ was almost universally panned by participants. It is seen as a space defined by judgement:

*“I had previously judged her based on the things she would post on social media. As I stepped back and realized she did so much for her children, it made me look at her in a different light.”*

*“Recently I have had to withdraw from social media because it is making me hate friends of mine for their political beliefs. I am just much healthier if I do not see that stuff.”*

*“I hate social media. It is full of people who are unwilling to give one another the benefit of the doubt or get to know them on a personal level. But I know so many people who are very different in person than in their Facebook persona.”*

This matches my own research in this area. The case in Chapter 2 of this dissertation is largely made using examples drawn from social media. I had originally intended to use similar sources in my chapter on Pluralism/Inclusivism, but could find virtually no examples of more open and accepting viewpoints using that particular medium, especially in relationship to politics.

It is not surprising that discussions of Utopia were also quick to suggest a social media free world as part of the Utopic vision:

*Also, more importantly there is no social media. Social media has hurt society and it leaves people to make their own judgement and people will often assume the worst. They end up being more paranoid and hateful.”*

*“In the future people will be free of social media and TV. They won’t just regurgitate what they see or hear, but go out and meet people.”*



This wish to suspend social media is incredibly striking, especially given the population the sample was drawn from. These were all individuals who are regular users of the internet, (after all, they depend on online surveys for at least some of their income) and yet when asked about their ideals they suggested removing the most commonly used element of that medium.<sup>298</sup> Unfortunately I did not survey respondent's current uses of social media or internet methods. It would be a promising avenue for future research to examine the relationship between individual's stated ideals and their consumption of internet content.

## INTERSECTIONS – GENDER AND RACE

This study also provided an opportunity to consider Exclusivism/Inclusivism/Pluralism through the lens of gender and race. As we will see in the following section, intersectional analysis opens new possibilities for the development of Political Pluralism, as well as warnings about the limits of the utopic imagination.

One major discovery of the work is that in both studies female respondents were much more likely to give Pluralist responses. This cut across all of the pertinent research questions, and generally among all research demographics. In the first study, comparison of male to female respondents show that men are considerably more likely to respond with answers that fall within an Exclusivist framework or to keep the conversation only at a minimally Inclusivist one – basic

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<sup>298</sup> According to recent research done by University of Southern California, internet users spend 22% of their time online on Social Media sites. This is the largest percentage of any category they give, topping internet searches (21%) and news/social sites (20%). Jeffrey Cole et. al., "The 2017 Digital Future Report," *Center for the Digital Future at USC Annenberg*, October 2017, <https://web.archive.org/web/20181124205310/http://www.digitalcenter.org/wp-content/uploads/2013/10/2017-Digital-Future-Report.pdf>



negotiations about joint self-interest. Women, on the other hand, were much more willing to ‘get to know’ the opposing side and more often expressed empathy and other Pluralist traits.<sup>299</sup>

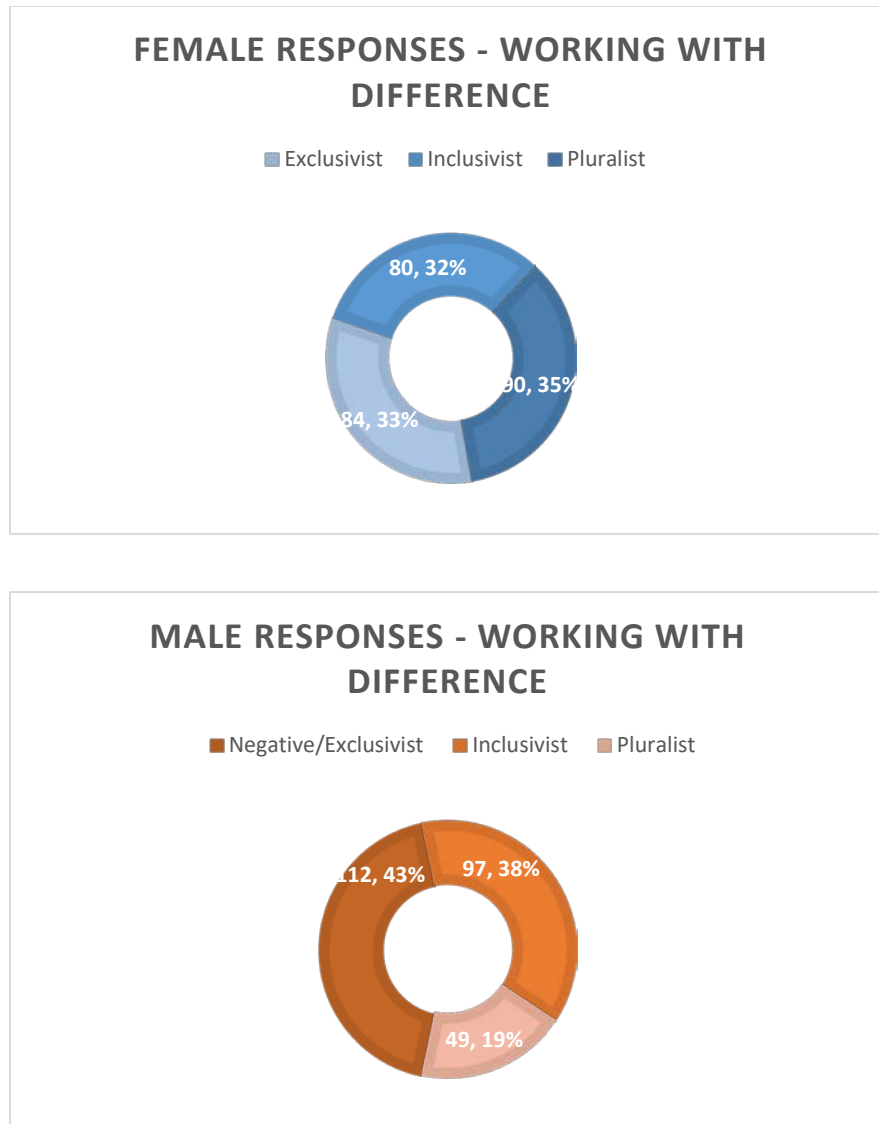


Figure 14 - Male and Female Responses to Difference, 2017 Survey

As mentioned in the previous chapter, Exclusivist thinking decreased in the second survey. However, even with the decrease, male respondents were still much more likely to

<sup>299</sup> Any quotations from my survey are unedited in respect to content. However, spelling and grammatical mistakes are corrected for ease of reading except in instances where I was unsure of the intended meaning of the response.



respond in an Exclusivist manner. They were also much less likely to describe the Other empathetically, instead discussing relationships in terms of negotiation or tolerance.<sup>300</sup>

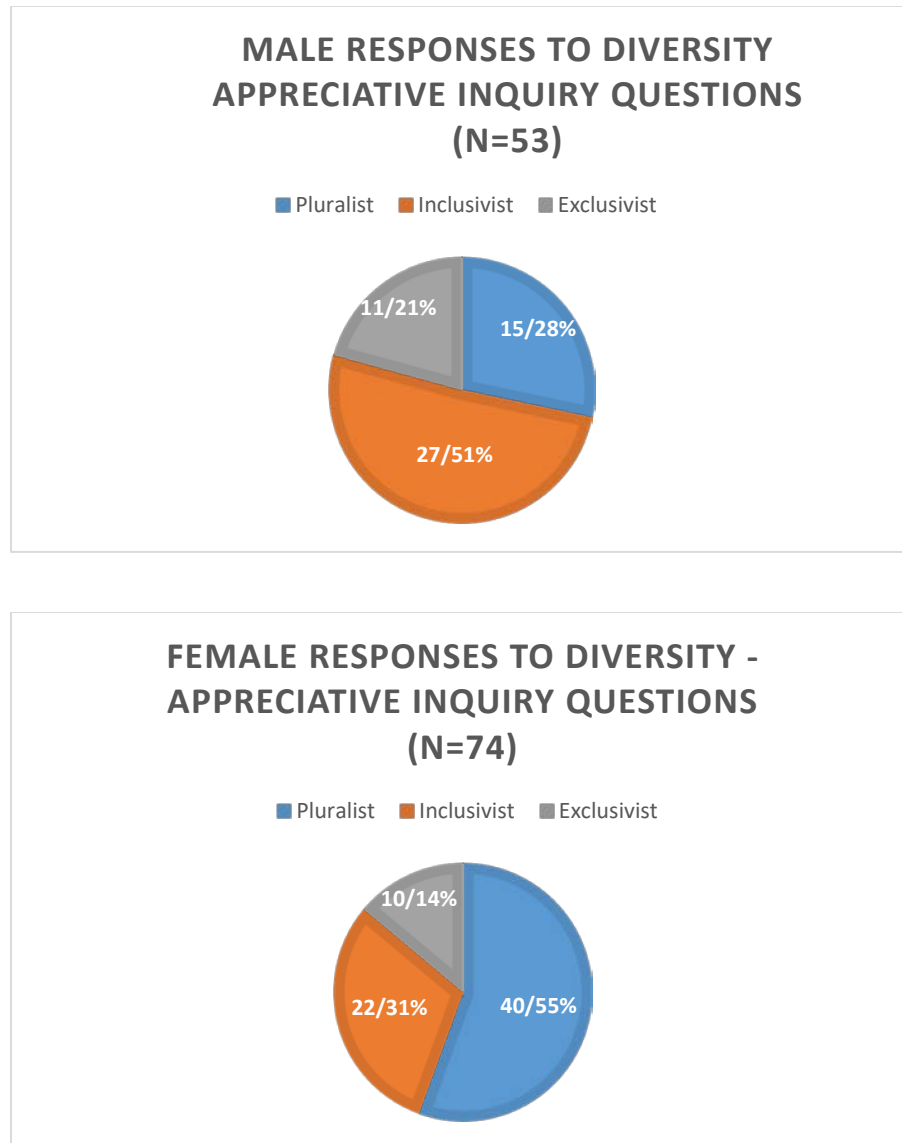


Figure 15 - Male and Female Appreciative Inquiry Responses

Of these Exclusivist responses, one item of note is the particularity of white male responses. Of the eleven Exclusivist male responses, seven reported being white male, and all of

<sup>300</sup> In this aspect of the survey I include the results of 125 individuals. Of the 25 other responses, 2 individuals chose to not share their sex, and 23 gave either responses that were not ideologically clear or went 'off topic' in such a manner that they could not be categorized.



these showed a greater degree of negativity and militarism as part of their responses. This occurred no matter if the individual identified as either a liberal or a conservative. For example:

*“I worked with a guy named Larry, who was my boss, and a conservative Republican. I learned I was right, most of them are lazy and have a sense of entitlement, and a view that everyone else is to be somehow looked down on, even when they exhibit the same flaws.”*

*“The republicans make me sick with their disregard for decency.”*

*“When I was on Facebook I used to joke about needing a “proceed with caution” disclaimer by my profile pic.....this man will verbally destroy you, you stand no chance.....God Bless Donald J. Trump.”*

*“I will once again give to talk about Ro here [mentioned in an earlier comment]. Ro was foreign born, from Sri Lanka and he was very unaware of the horrendous nature of the democrat party and he leaned left. Now this was back in the early 2000's before the democrat party had fully transitioned into the regressive-socialist democrat party that we have today....what I learned was how leftist propaganda really seeps into those who haven't been exposed to actual truth.”*

This same negativity translates into their senses of Utopia. For many of these white males, even their dreams of the future are focused on the *removal* of a current adversary.

*“In my ideal future I'd say the GOP doesn't really exist anymore because as long as they are around being oppressive and judgmental things will never get better.”*

*“The regressive-socialist-democrat party has basically gone by the wayside. It has been replaced by a newer party that's libertarian in nature. All the post-modern bullshit that is currently being shoved down our throats has been exposed for the insanity that it truly is.”*

*“That all liberals would fall in a hole and disappear unless they agreed to shape up and be reasonable honest human beings who don't follow idiots like sheep and think for themselves.”*

Women Exclusivists (of all races) used considerably softer tones, even when expressing fundamentally Exclusivist points. For example:



*“[To create a Utopia] ...first I eliminate religions, through the years religions has been the cause of a lot of wars and conflicts between people and between countries. Second, I eliminate nuclear weapons, this make an unnecessary tension between countries and I'll try that all the people talk the same language so there's no bonds between people around the world.”*

*“In my ideal world there are no more political partisan parties. We are all ONE party. We all work together, and those who do not work do not get to eat. Government is minimized and the free market allows the economy to flourish.”*

Female Exclusivists are also much more likely to be sure to include non-violent language as part of their framing for a future Utopia. This characteristic was noticeably missing from most male respondents:

*“My ideal world has no violence...peace, salvation for the entire world. None of us will have evil thoughts of any kind...just be loving to each other. Everyone will come to know Jesus, and there will be peace between nations.”*

*“I wish that people would stop being so angry with each other and instead accept others. I wish that people would be able to see the truth about the way things really are (i.e. climate change and the major issues), because I think conservatives who advocate for the wrong thing just don't know better. Perhaps if we educate them they will stop believing such nonsense.”*

From the standpoint of our Exclusivist/Inclusivist categorizations, these responses are very close to an Inclusivist stance, especially the second entry. Indeed, I debated which of the two categories to place them in. I finally settled on Exclusivism because they both refer to the end of opposing sides, and the second entry involves a certain type of proselytization (through ‘education’) that precludes alternate viewpoints. However, neither involves active hostility.

Some feminist theorists refer to this a “relational thinking,” arguing women are socialized to prioritize relationships over competitive and violent behavior.<sup>301</sup> While I want to be careful

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<sup>301</sup> This theory has its roots in Carol Gilligan’s Ethics of Care, which presupposes a particularly ‘feminine’ approach to relationships based on the central value of care. For more information see Carol Gilligan, *In a Different Voice*:



not to essentialize gender traits, the responses in my survey do reflect a broad attitude among female respondents as one that is much more open and affirming. This is reflected in both the greater presence of Pluralistic thinking as well as in the ‘lighter touch’ of Exclusivist viewpoints.

From the standpoint of Appreciative Inquiry, this indicates that women ought to be at the center of any Utopic peacemaking efforts. Appreciative Inquiry stands on the ground that there is always good in any system, and those aspects and relationships should be highlighted. Systems that focus on the voices of men who are much more likely to focus on the negative aspects of the system lose many ‘hidden’ positive relationships that are created and maintained by the women of the community. This matches the pattern of peacemaking efforts described by Meena Sharify-Funk and Christina Woolner described in Chapter 3 of this text.

Similarly it is worth noting that the Exclusivist men in this study, were they in an in-person interview with an Appreciative Inquiry practitioner, likely would have been redirected by the interviewer for “slipping into a negative mindset.” In many in-person Appreciative Inquiry studies, researchers “stop interviewees if they begin to elicit deficit thinking, as this limits their ability to create a positive future.”<sup>302</sup> The online format of this study allowed men to take a negative mindset further as there was no proper moderator. However, for our purposes it was helpful in that it showed WHO was dedicated enough to their Exclusivism that they reverted to negativity and resentment, even when primed with positive leading questions.

Another element that became obvious quickly in my analysis was the differences in conception of race between white respondents and those of basically all minorities. In describing

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*Psychological Theory and Women's Development* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1982). For a larger intersectional discussion of the interplay between women's issues and peacemaking see Tarja Vayrynen, “Gender and Peacebuilding” in *Palgrave Advances in Peacebuilding*, ed. Oliver Richmond (New York: Routledge, 2007).

<sup>302</sup> Kelm, *Appreciative Living*, 137.



their ideal utopias, white respondents were much less likely to identify racism as a “core factor” that needs to be addressed. Most, if race is addressed at all, would discuss it only as a ‘joint statement,’ listed alongside sexism, racism etc.:

*“I imagine people of all races, genders, sexual orientations, and social status are all getting along and respecting each other.”*

*“I wish everyone would be open minded, and not prejudiced based on sex, race, or other factors.”*

*“In my dream world, people from all backgrounds, races, and religions join together. They learn from one another and work together.”*

Of the 76 white respondents, only four dedicated at least one full single sentence to addressing racism as a part of their utopic imagination. This is true regardless of Exclusivist/Inclusivist/ Pluralist orientation. Further, two of these four expressed their preference as a form of for “color blindness:”

*“[A Utopia will] have color blindness, so that judgments are not made due to race. To have true equal opportunity for all based on skill and the opportunity for all to learn the skills they wish to pursue.”*

*“We need to be able to look past race and sex, and make it so we don’t see these any more. If we do this we can make better decisions for one another.”*

Yet another white respondent considered race relations primarily through the visual representations they hope to see in the media, rather than as a life issue:

*“In the future I hope my news isn’t filled with conflicts in [the] street between people of different races.”*

These examples show the emotional distance that whites put between themselves and the topic of race. Racism is not a lived experience, and as an ideal it is something that ought to be ignored or transcended. In many ways, this is a failure of the Pluralistic imagination. Racism,



when it is imagined at all, is at most seen through an “Inclusivist” lens, where minority respondents join whites in a ‘color blind’ society.

I believe this should be a major focal point for continued discussion, as this research shows that whites have a clear inability to “visit” the experiences of minorities. This matches other research on white privilege, which often notes how whites have a “lack of clarity” when imagining the challenges faced by non-whites.<sup>303</sup>

Minority respondents, in contrast, were not afraid to address race directly. Of the 74 minority respondents, 12 discussed racial justice issues in detail:

*“My dream is that there was no racism and discrimination, people are not judged by the color of their skin. The police no longer pull us over for nothing, and courts give us the same leniency they always have of white people.”*

*“People of the world get along and there is slim to ideally zero percent racism.”*

*“Eliminate racism. Sure we are all different colors on the outside but we all look the same on the inside and in the ground when we die. We all can get rewarded for what we put in to society.”*

*“I would wish that racism comes to an end. There is no pain or suffering and together we can all equally thrive and live to our fullest potential without feelings of resentment, jealousy, or hatred toward any other segment of the population.”*

These answers, although focusing on the positive, show autobiographical context (i.e. “the police will no longer pull us over for nothing”) that bespeak minority experience with racism in action.

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<sup>303</sup> See, Frances Kendall, *Understanding White Privilege: Creating Pathways of Authentic Relationships Across Race* (New York: Routledge, 2006); Robin DiAngelo, *White Fragility: Why it’s so Hard for White People to Talk About Racism* (Boston: Beacon Press, 2018).



This being said, the research also offered a wide range of examples of positive race relations. These include numerous tales of trans-racial friendship and respect, even across political lines. For example,

*“I am an African American woman. My fellow therapist is an elderly conservative Christian man who votes Republican. I was originally going to hate him as a bigot but I slowly realized he’s a very effective therapist who loves to learn, and also a tolerant person. We have worked together to craft unique questions to ask our clients to find out drug seekers and those who may not be open about their true problems. We also have become very good friends.”*

*“[from a white liberal] My mentor is a black woman that loves Trump but is the greatest person alive to me. At first I thought she was a sellout, but I realize now she is the opposite. She has deeply held beliefs, and I respect that she holds to what she believes in even if she differs from other black people. She has taught me so much and I really respect her.”*

*“[from a Hispanic woman] ok well this Asian guy I work with tony is a democrat I am a republican and we work great together he actually teaches me a lot about politics and his side of things to where I am like oh ok I see why u feel that way the high point is me learning more about things I had no clue about. I learned to keep an open mind.”*

These types of stories highlight that even with both racial and political barriers, productive relationships are much more common than most media conversations give credit to, even among more conservative members of American society. The examples above also highlight sub-groupings that are rarely spoken about (i.e. the 8% of African Americans who voted for Donald Trump).<sup>304</sup> Recognizing these unique formulations of relationships is at the heart of what visiting the other is all about, and demonstrates that there can be meaningful relationships across such divides.

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<sup>304</sup> Roper Center for Public Opinion Research, “How Groups Voted 2016” Cornell University, May 10, 2017, <https://web.archive.org/web/20190113012351/https://ropercenter.cornell.edu/polls/us-elections/how-groups-voted/groups-voted-2016/>



## ELEMENTS FOR FUTURE INCLUSION

Moving forward, there are a number of ways in which this research can be deepened and expanded. First, there are a several possibilities to leverage the two surveys that I created to provide further information. As noted in the methods section, there are a number elements from my first survey that remain unanalyzed. The goal for this project was to develop a definition of Exclusivism/Inclusivism/Pluralism as they operate in the public sphere. Now that these categories have been operationalized, a further project would be take the qualitative results and integrate them with the statistical batteries I collected. For example, my first survey has a robust data set on social movements and political mobilization (particularly the “Progressive Social Movement Ideology Test” developed by Aaron McCright and Riley Dunlap)<sup>305</sup> as well as racial bias.<sup>306</sup> Further analysis could compare Political Exclusivism/Inclusivism/Pluralism with wider political participation. This provides opportunity to test the theory against the wider existent Social Science literature and pose additional research questions (i.e. Which categories correlate with political activism? Or with other indicators of political ideology? Does the presence of Political Pluralism indicate less racial bias or resentment?). Similarly, my Appreciative Inquiry survey provides a wealth of qualitative data that could be reviewed to provide additional insights and further research questions.

Second, the Appreciative Inquiry method itself also offers further avenues for research. For this project, I utilized Appreciative Inquiry primarily as a research tool to develop my theory of Exclusivism/Inclusivism/Pluralism. However, very often Appreciative Inquiry is organized as

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<sup>305</sup> Aaron McCright and Riley E. Dunlap, “The Nature and Social Bases of Progressive Social Movement Ideology: Examining Public Opinion toward Social Movements,” *The Sociological Quarterly* 49, no 4 (2008): 825-848.

<sup>306</sup> Edward Carmines, Paul Sniderman and Beth Easter, “On the Meaning, Measurement, and Implications of Racial Resentment,” *The Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science* 634 (2011): 98-116.



an intervention program. Interview questions are one step in a longer sequence that includes action mapping for a particular community. For example, the United Religions Initiative developed a series of activities as part of its program designed to develop appreciative relationships in participants.<sup>307</sup> Similarly, if our goal is to develop Political Pluralism, then a parallel program might be developed that is designed to highlight political diversity and cooperation. This would also match best practices suggested in Interfaith Dialogue materials. As David Smock writes, “One-time dialogue sessions are of limited value. Ideally a series of sessions is always desirable, as are actionable follow-ups and activities.”<sup>308</sup> The site of such programs could be in any of the social locations mentioned earlier in this chapter.

Third, in respect to theory development there are a number of avenues where the work done here could be deepened or expanded. For example, one aspect of this discussion not addressed directly here is the question of differences between conservative and liberal Exclusivists. In my survey analysis I largely treated Exclusivism as an ‘apolitical’ category, i.e. as one that is utilized by both the left and the right. However, further analysis of these results answers may elicit new theory concerning the differences between the Exclusivist Left and Exclusivist Right. Similarly, this analysis has looked primarily at Exclusivism/Inclusivism/Pluralism through populist conceptions, and not in the actions of institutional politics. It merits consideration how political parties and other governing institutions perpetuate and encourage Exclusivist viewpoints as a method of encouraging party fealty and retaining institutional power.

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<sup>307</sup> “Interfaith Peacebuilding Guide.” Resource Guide, *United Religions Initiative* (October 2004), [https://web.archive.org/web/20180810055414/http://www.uri.org/sites/default/files/media/document/2017/URI\\_Interfaith\\_Peacebuilding\\_Guide.pdf](https://web.archive.org/web/20180810055414/http://www.uri.org/sites/default/files/media/document/2017/URI_Interfaith_Peacebuilding_Guide.pdf)

<sup>308</sup> Smock, *Interfaith Dialogue and Peacemaking*, 131.



As I noted earlier in this chapter, there is also considerable work to be done in respect to theorizing about Exclusivism/Inclusivism/Pluralism and its relationship to gender/race. Further research could look at the nature of responses given between any of the different racial or gendered categories (African Americans vs. Caucasian vs Hispanics etc.; male vs. female responses) to see where Exclusivism/Inclusivism/Pluralism is more or less likely to develop. In respect to White participants especially, my work highlights the need for whites to deepen their understanding of the experiences of minorities. Developing a program that allows whites to better ‘Visit’ minority grievance would be an important project in its own right.

## CONCLUSION

In summary, this dissertation has considered dominant forms of political and social discourse in the United States as they relate to diversity. As an interpretive lens, it adapts classic concepts from the field of Theology of Religions – Exclusivism, Inclusivism and Pluralism. Exclusivism is defined by a singular conception of truth which necessitates the removal of competing truth claims. Although there are examples of Exclusivists acting in a caring manner towards the Other, as a category it is much more likely to result in isolationism or in proselytization/violence designed to remove the Other. As a political category, it often manifests itself through intense partisanship. Sadly, it is by far the most common political ideology in the United States and often encouraged by political elites. This has several negative consequences for the American public, including isolation, stereotyping, mistrust, and in the worst cases violence.

Political Inclusivism, while much milder in attitude, still perceives the Other through the viewpoint of one’s own interpretive lens. While this viewpoint is considerably less likely to



result in direct hostility, the constant referral of one's own values and narrative poses barriers to developing deep connections. As a result, it is much more likely to result in "association," i.e. self-interested cooperation. Political Pluralism is the only category that takes the viewpoint of the Other seriously, and this respect for the Other's viewpoint allows for the greatest possibility of legitimate appreciation and friendship.

The second half of this dissertation considers Political Exclusivism/Inclusivism/Pluralism through the lens of two surveys that were administered in 2017 and 2018 respectively. Both were large surveys (2017, n=850; 2018, n=150) that concerned participants viewpoints towards diversity. Contrary to popular narratives, I found that Political Pluralism does exist in our society. Although it is often 'hidden,' individuals of many political stripes have stories of friendship and comradery that extend beyond political dividing lines. These develop over the course of everyday conversations at work, school, or while participating in mutual interest clubs or other volunteer activities. These results show that individuals interested in creating a deeper sense of Political Pluralism in our social life ought to be deliberate in integrating diversity into institutions, including workplaces and educational curriculum.

Through the use of Appreciative Inquiry techniques, this work also demonstrates the power of asking positive questions in leading individuals to consider new narratives. Rarely in our society are we asked to reflect on diversity directly, or on the positive relationships that we may already possess. By ignoring these narratives we fail to recognize a source of strength. If we are to move forward towards creating a new America that recognizes the experiences of all of its citizens, we need to do more to strengthen this Pluralistic sense of truth. Only in doing so can we create a Utopia that provides for everyone in our community.



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# Appendices

## Appendix A: Survey #1 (2017) Consent Form

### Identification of Investigator and Purpose of Study

You are invited to participate in a research study, entitled “MTurk Online Survey: Religious and Political Views 2017” The study is being conducted by **Casey Crosbie** under the supervision of **Dr. Najeeba Syeed** of Claremont School of Theology, 1325 N. College Ave; Claremont, CA 91711, [[nsyeed@cst.edu](mailto:nsyeed@cst.edu); 909-447-2500].

The purpose of this research study is to examine religious and political viewpoints as well as degrees of political activism over the last twelve months. Your participation in the study will contribute to a better understanding of how and why individuals choose to participate in creating political change. You are free to contact the investigator using the information below to discuss the study.

Casey Crosbie

[Casey.crosbie@cst.edu](mailto:Casey.crosbie@cst.edu)

909-477-1212

You must be at least 18 years old to participate.

If you agree to participate:

- Your participation will consist of answering a 40 question survey, containing questions about your religious views, political views, and recent political activity. The survey will take approximately 20 minutes.
- You will be compensated \$1.00\* for completing this survey through Amazon Mechanical Turk’s payment system.

### Risks and Confidentiality of Data

Risks to participants are minimal. Collection of data and survey responses using the internet involves the same risks that a person would encounter in everyday use of the internet, such as breach of confidentiality. While the



researchers have taken every reasonable step to protect your confidentiality, there is always the possibility of interception or hacking of the data by third parties that is not under the control of the research team.

You may feel uncomfortable answering questions about your race or religiosity. If so, you may skip any question or end the survey at any time.

Researchers take all steps possible to ensure participant anonymity. The only identifier this team will have access to is your MTurk worker ID. MTurk worker IDs will only be collected for the purposes of distributing compensation and will not be associated with survey responses. MTurk worker IDs will not be shared with anyone outside of the principle investigator, and will be deleted following payment. Data collected from you will be coded with a random number. There will be no costs for participating. Only the principal investigator Casey Crosbie will have access to the data during data collection. Any information provided will remain confidential and kept in a password protected computer file in the researcher's office for a minimum of five years, after which time it will be destroyed.

When the results of the research are published or discussed in conferences, no information will be included that would reveal your identity. Information from this study will only reported as aggregate data, never as particular individuals.

## **Participation or Withdrawal**

Your participation in this study is voluntary. You may decline to answer any question and you have the right to withdraw from participation at any time. Withdrawal will not affect your relationship with Claremont School of Theology in any way. If you do not want to participate, you may simply stop participating.

## **Contacts**

If you have any questions about the study contact the primary investigator **Casey Crosbie** at **909-477-1212** or send an email to **casey.crosbie@cst.edu**. This study has been reviewed by Claremont School of Theology Institutional Review Board and was granted an exemption.

## **Questions about your rights as a research participant.**

If you would like a copy of the completed dissertation, please contact Casey Crosbie at 909-477-1212 or email [casey.crosbie@cst.edu](mailto:casey.crosbie@cst.edu).



By entering this survey, you are indicating that you have read the consent form, you are age 18 or older and that you voluntarily agree to participate in this research study. Amazon has access to your MTurk ID and personal information (social security number, IP address, bank account information, etc...). Please make sure that you have read and agree to Amazon's Mechanical Turk participant and privacy agreements as these may impact the disclosure and use of your personal information.

If you have questions about your rights or are dissatisfied at any time with any part of this study, you can contact, anonymously if you wish, the chair of the Institutional Review Board by phone at (909) 447-6344 or email at [irb@cst.edu](mailto:irb@cst.edu).

Please print this page for your records.

Thank you.

☐

I agree, and wish to enter the survey.

☐

I do not agree. Please take me back to the main MTurk homepage.

## **Appendix B: Survey #1 (2017) Questionnaire**

### **Demographic Information**

- 1) What is your level of Education?
  - a. 1<sup>st</sup> – 8<sup>th</sup> Grade
  - b. 9<sup>th</sup> – 11<sup>th</sup> Grade
  - c. High School Graduate
  - d. Technical/Vocational School Graduate
  - e. Some College
  - f. College Graduate
  - g. Advanced Degree Graduate
  - h. Prefer not to answer.
- 2) What is your sex?
  - a. Female
  - b. Male
  - c. Other



- d. Prefer not to answer.
- 3) What is your Age?
  - a. 12-17 years old
  - b. 18-24 years old
  - c. 25-34 years old
  - d. 35-44 years old
  - e. 45-54 years old
  - f. 55-64 years old
  - g. 65-74 years old
  - h. 75 years or older
  - i. Prefer not to answer.
- 4) What is your Family's Annual Income?
  - a. Less than \$10,000
  - b. \$10,000-\$19,000
  - c. \$20,000-\$29,000
  - d. \$30,000-\$39,000
  - e. \$40,000-\$49,000
  - f. \$50,000-\$74,000
  - g. \$70,000-\$99,000
  - h. \$100,000-\$119,000
  - i. More than \$120,000
  - j. Prefer not to answer.
- 5) How do you identify your race/ethnicity?
  - a. White
  - b. Hispanic or Latino
  - c. Black or African American
  - d. Native American or American Indian
  - e. Asian / Pacific Islander
  - f. Middle Eastern/North African\*
  - g. Other
  - h. Prefer not to answer.
- 6) What type of area do you live in?
  - a. A Small Town
  - b. Suburb or Small City
  - c. Large City
  - d. Prefer not to answer

### **Political and Social Involvement Questionnaire**

- 7) There are many social movements that try to have an impact on policy-making in our nation. For each of the following social movements, please tell me how much of an impact you think it has had on our nation's policies – a great deal = 1, a moderate amount =2, a slight amount = 3, none at all =4.
  - a. Civil Rights
  - b. Abortion Rights
  - c. Gay and Lesbian (LGBTQI) Rights
  - d. Environmental Rights



- e. Women's Rights
  - f. Animal Rights
  - g. Consumer's Rights
  - h. Labor Rights
  - i. Prefer not to answer.
- 8) Regardless of their impact or lack thereof, please tell us if you personally agree or disagree with these movement's goals – Strongly disagree =1, somewhat disagree =2, somewhat agree =3, strongly agree =4
- a. Civil/Racial Rights
  - b. Abortion Rights
  - c. Gay and Lesbian (LGBTQI) Rights
  - d. Environmental Rights
  - e. Women's Rights
  - f. Animal Rights
  - g. Consumer's Rights
  - h. Labor Rights
  - i. Prefer not to answer.
  - j. Click "Strongly Disagree"
- 9) How would you best characterize your involvement in political activities and frequency of involvement over the last 12 months? None=1, A Few Times a Year=2, Around Once a Month =3, Several Times a Month =4, Several Times a Week =5
- a. Attending political events, rallies, and protests
  - b. Volunteering for advocacy efforts, i.e. canvassing/phonebanking
  - c. Financially contributing to relevant organizations
  - d. Fundraising for relevant organizations
  - e. Contacting a government official (by phone, by letter or in person)
  - f. Serving as a leader of a local political party
  - g. Serving as a leader of a local grassroots/advocacy organization
  - h. Sending "letters to the editor" or opinion pieces to a newspaper or magazine
  - i. Participating in online forums and blogging communities
  - j. Other
  - k. None of the activities listed above
  - l. Prefer not to answer.
- 10) How often have you engaged in activism around the following issues in the last 12 months? None=1, A Few Times a Year=2, Around Once a Month =3, Several Times a Month =4, Several Times a Week =5
- a. Civil/Racial Rights
  - b. Abortion Rights
  - c. Gay and Lesbian (LGBTQI) Rights
  - d. Environmental Rights
  - e. Women's Rights
  - f. Animal Rights
  - g. Consumer's Rights
  - h. Labor Rights
  - i. Prefer not to answer
- 11) How would you rate yourself on the political spectrum?



- a. Very Conservative
  - b. Conservative
  - c. Middle of the Road
  - d. Liberal
  - e. Very Liberal
  - f. Prefer not to answer
- 12) With what political party do you identify?
- a. Republican
  - b. Lean Republican
  - c. Independent
  - d. Lean Democrat
  - e. Democrat
  - f. Prefer not to answer
- 13) Did you vote in the most recent presidential election?
- a. Yes
  - b. No.
  - c. Prefer not to answer
- 14) How much confidence do you have in the following institutions in our society? None at all =1, Little =2, Some =3, A great deal =4
- a. The police
  - b. The criminal justice system
  - c. The federal government
  - d. The presidency\*
  - e. Local government\*
  - f. News organizations
  - g. Large business corporations
  - h. Prefer not to answer

### **Questions on Religiosity**

- 15) How important is religion to your life? (McCright and Dunlap, 2008, Q8)
- a. Not Very Important
  - b. Somewhat Important
  - c. Very Important
  - d. Extremely Important
  - e. Prefer not to answer
- 16) Do you self-identify as:
- a. Evangelical Christian
  - b. Mainline Protestant Christian
  - c. Catholic
  - d. Mormon
  - e. Jew
  - f. Muslim
  - g. Atheist/Agnostic
  - h. Buddhist
  - i. Hindu



- j. None
  - k. Prefer not to answer
- 17) Aside from weddings and funerals, how often do you attend religious services?
- a. Never
  - b. Seldom
  - c. A few times a year
  - d. Once or twice a month
  - e. Once a week
  - f. More than once a week
  - g. Prefer not to answer
- 18) How often do you read the holy text of your particular tradition?
- a. Never
  - b. Seldom
  - c. A few times a year
  - d. Once or twice a month
  - e. Once a week
  - f. More than once a week
  - g. Prefer not to answer
- 19) How often do you pray or meditate?
- a. Never
  - b. Seldom
  - c. A few times a year
  - d. Once or twice a month
  - e. Once a week
  - f. More than once a week
  - g. Prefer not to answer
- 20) On a scale of 1-10 how much do you trust the following sources when it comes to questions of right and wrong? Not at all=1, Completely =10
- a. Religious teachings and beliefs
  - b. Philosophy and reason
  - c. Practical experience and common sense
  - d. Scientific information
  - e. Prefer not to answer
- 21) Which comes closest to your view of the divine?
- a. The divine is a person with whom people can have a relationship
  - b. The divine is an impersonal force
  - c. Prefer not to answer
- 22) Thinking about your beliefs, which of the following statements comes closest to your view?
- a. People should preserve traditional beliefs and practices whenever possible.
  - b. Adjust traditional beliefs and practices in light of new circumstances
  - c. Adopt modern beliefs and practices
  - d. Prefer not to answer
- 23) We'd like to get your feelings toward a number of groups on a "feeling thermometer." A rating of zero degrees means you feel as cold and negative as possible. A rating of 100



degrees means you feel as warm and positive as possible. You would rate the group at 50 degrees if you don't feel particularly positive or negative toward the group.

- a. Evangelical Christians
  - b. Mainline Protestant Christians
  - c. Catholics
  - d. Mormons
  - e. Jews
  - f. Muslims
  - g. Atheist/Agnostic
  - h. Buddhists
  - i. Hindus
  - j. Prefer not to answer
- 24) Do you, personally, happen to know anyone who is ... [Check all that apply. Not counting yourself. ]
- a. Evangelical Christian
  - b. Mainline Protestant Christian
  - c. Catholic
  - d. Mormon
  - e. Jew
  - f. Muslim
  - g. Atheist/Agnostic
  - h. Buddhist
  - i. Hindu
  - j. Prefer not to answer
- 25) How much do you know about the beliefs and practices of...? Nothing at all =1, A little =2, A Lot =3
- a. Evangelical Christians
  - b. Mainline Protestant Christians
  - c. Catholics
  - d. Mormons
  - e. Jews
  - f. Muslims
  - g. Atheist/Agnostics
  - h. Buddhists
  - i. Hindus
  - j. Prefer not to answer
- 26) Thinking about the conversations you have had with different types of people in the last 12 months, how often have you had a conversations with someone who, as far as you know, is....? Never =1, Once or Twice=2, Once a Month=3, Weekly=4, Daily=5,
- a. Evangelical Christian
  - b. Mainline Protestant Christian
  - c. Catholic
  - d. Mormon
  - e. Jew
  - f. Muslim
  - g. Atheist/Agnostic



- h. Buddhist
- i. Hindu
- j. Prefer not to answer

### Questions on Race and Society

- 27) We'd like to get your feelings toward a number of groups on a "feeling thermometer." A rating of zero degrees means you feel as cold and negative as possible. A rating of 100 degrees means you feel as warm and positive as possible. You would rate the group at 50 degrees if you don't feel particularly positive or negative toward the group.
- a. Hispanics
  - b. Blacks
  - c. Whites
  - d. Native American or American Indian
  - e. Asian / Pacific Islander
  - f. Middle Eastern/North African
  - g. Women
  - h. Low income people
  - i. Middle class people
  - j. Wealthy people
  - k. Prefer not to answer
- 28) Thinking about the conversations you have had with different types of people in the last 12 months, how often have you had a conversations with someone who, as far as you know, is....? Never =1, Once or Twice=2, Once a Month=3, Weekly=4, Daily=5,
- a. Hispanics
  - b. Blacks
  - c. Whites
  - d. Native American or American Indian
  - e. Asian / Pacific Islander
  - f. Middle Eastern/North African
  - g. Women
  - h. Low income people
  - i. Middle class people
  - j. Wealthy people
  - k. Prefer not to answer
- 29) Blacks and other Minorities receive equal treatment as whites in the criminal justice system.
- a. Completely disagree
  - b. Mostly disagree
  - c. Mostly agree
  - d. Completely agree
  - e. Prefer not to answer
- 30) White men are losing influence over American culture
- a. Completely disagree
  - b. Mostly disagree
  - c. Mostly agree
  - d. Completely agree



- e. Prefer not to answer
- 31) Police officers generally treat blacks and other minorities the same as whites.
  - a. Completely disagree
  - b. Mostly disagree
  - c. Mostly agree
  - d. Completely agree
  - e. Prefer not to answer
- 32) Just your impression, in the United States today, is there a lot of discrimination against any of the following groups or not? No, there is not a lot of discrimination=1 Yes, there is a lot of discrimination =2 re
  - a. Hispanics
  - b. Blacks
  - c. Whites
  - d. Native American or American Indian
  - e. Asian / Pacific Islander
  - f. Middle Eastern/North African
  - g. Women
  - h. Low income people
  - i. Middle class people
  - j. Wealthy people
  - k. Prefer not to answer
- 33) How well does the federal government look out for the needs of the following groups? Not all well =1, Not too well =2, Somewhat well =3, Very well =4
  - a. Hispanics
  - b. Blacks
  - c. Whites
  - d. Native American or American Indian
  - e. Asian / Pacific Islander
  - f. Middle Eastern/North African
  - g. Women
  - h. Low income people
  - i. Middle class people
  - j. Wealthy people
  - k. Prefer not to answer
- 34) Over the past few years minorities have gotten less than they deserve.
  - a. Completely disagree
  - b. Mostly disagree
  - c. Mostly agree
  - d. Completely agree
  - e. Prefer not to answer
- 35) If minorities just tried harder they could be just as well off as whites
  - a. Completely disagree
  - b. Mostly disagree
  - c. Mostly agree
  - d. Completely agree
  - e. Prefer not to answer



- 36) Generations of slavery and discrimination have created conditions that make it difficult for blacks to work their way out of the lower class.
- a. Completely disagree
  - b. Mostly disagree
  - c. Mostly agree
  - d. Completely agree
  - e. Prefer not to answer
- 37) Hard work and determination are NO guarantee of success for most people.
- a. Completely disagree
  - b. Mostly disagree
  - c. Mostly agree
  - d. Completely agree
  - e. Prefer not to answer
- 38) In your opinion, what is the best way to create positive social change for your community?
- 39) Think of a group that makes you uncomfortable (this could mean people of a different race, political affiliation, or religion). What, if anything, would make you more comfortable working with them on a project you both believe in?
- 40) What are the top factors that hold you back from engaging more in politics?



## Appendix C: Survey #1 (2017) Relevant Data Summary

### *Q1 - What is your level of Education?*

#	Answer	%	Count
1	1st - 8th Grade	0.00%	0
2	9th - 11th Grade	0.14%	1
3	High School Graduate	12.99%	93
4	Technical/Vocational School Graduate	4.05%	29
5	Some College	29.89%	214
6	College Graduate	44.69%	320
7	Advanced Degree Graduate	8.24%	59
	Total	100%	716

### *Q2 - What is your sex?*

#	Answer	%	Count
1	Male	59.38%	418
2	Female	40.34%	284
3	Other	0.28%	2
	Total	100%	704

### *Q3 - What is your age?*

#	Answer	%	Count
1	18-24 years old	12.34%	88
2	25-34 years old	53.16%	379
3	35-44 years old	23.98%	171
4	45-54 years old	6.59%	47
5	55-64 years old	3.09%	22
6	65-74 years old	0.84%	6
7	75 years or older	0.00%	0
	Total	100%	713

### *Q4 - What is your Family's Annual Income*

#	Answer	%	Count
1	Less than \$10,000	5.18%	37
2	\$10,000 - \$19,999	9.10%	65
3	\$20,000 - \$29,999	14.71%	105
4	\$30,000 - \$39,999	14.99%	107
5	\$40,000 - \$49,999	13.59%	97
6	\$50,000 - \$59,999	11.62%	83
7	\$60,000 - \$69,999	7.84%	56



8	\$70,000 - \$79,999	7.00%	50
9	\$80,000 - \$89,999	5.04%	36
10	\$90,000 - \$99,999	3.50%	25
11	\$100,000 - \$149,999	4.76%	34
12	More than \$150,000	2.66%	19
	Total	100%	714

*Q5 - How do you identify your race/ethnicity*

#	Answer	%	Count
1	White	52.52%	375
2	Black or African American	20.31%	145
3	American Indian or Alaska Native	1.68%	12
4	Asian	12.89%	92
5	Native Hawaiian or Pacific Islander	0.28%	2
6	Other	1.12%	8
7	Hispanic or Latino/a	10.64%	76
8	Middle Eastern/North African	0.56%	4
	Total	100%	714

*Q6 - What type of area do you live in?*

#	Answer	%	Count
1	A Small Town	19.75%	140
2	Suburb or Small City	52.75%	374
3	Large City	27.50%	195
	Total	100%	709

*Q11 - How do you rate yourself on the political spectrum?*

#	Answer	%	Count
1	Very Conservative	6.86%	49
2	Conservative	20.45%	146
3	Middle of the Road	27.17%	194
4	Liberal	30.53%	218
5	Very Liberal	14.99%	107
	Total	100%	714

*Q12 - Which of the following best describes your identity?*

#	Answer	%	Count
1	Republican	14.39%	103
2	Lean Republican	11.45%	82



3	Independent	29.05%	208
4	Lean Democrat	18.72%	134
5	Democrat	26.40%	189
	Total	100%	716

*Q16 - Do you self-identify as:*

#	Answer	%	Count
1	Evangelical Christian	16.24%	115
2	Mainline Protestant Christian	21.33%	151
3	Catholic	20.06%	142
4	Mormon	1.13%	8
5	Jewish	1.55%	11
6	Muslim	1.27%	9
7	Atheist/Agnostic	24.58%	174
8	Buddhist	1.27%	9
9	Hindu	1.27%	9
10	None	11.30%	80
	Total	100%	708

\*Please reach out to the author for a complete list of descriptive statistics or to view my data.



## Appendix D: Survey #2 (2018) Consent Form

### Identification of Investigator and Purpose of Study

You are invited to participate in a research study, entitled “MTurk Online Survey: Appreciative Inquiry, Diversity, and Religion 2018.” The study is being conducted by **Casey Crosbie** under the supervision of **Dr. Najeeba Syeed** of Claremont School of Theology, 1325 N. College Ave; Claremont, CA 91711, [nsyeed@cst.edu; 909-447-2500].

The purpose of this study is to research how individuals think about difference, and what values they draw upon when they work with groups other than their own. You are free to contact the investigator using the information below to discuss the study.

Casey Crosbie

[Casey.crosbie@cst.edu](mailto:Casey.crosbie@cst.edu)

909-477-1212

You must be at least 18 years old to participate.

If you agree to participate:

- Your participation will consist of answering a 23 question survey. The first 9 questions are short answer, followed by 14 demographic questions containing questions about your religious views, political views, and recent political activity. The survey will take approximately 20-30 minutes.
- You will be compensated \$1.00\* for completing this survey through Amazon Mechanical Turk’s payment system.

### Risks and Confidentiality of Data

Risks to participants are minimal. Collection of data and survey responses using the internet involves the same risks that a person would encounter in everyday use of the internet, such as breach of confidentiality. While the



researchers have taken every reasonable step to protect your confidentiality, there is always the possibility of interception or hacking of the data by third parties that is not under the control of the research team.

You may feel uncomfortable answering questions about your beliefs, politics, race, or religiosity. If so, you may skip any question or end the survey at any time.

Researchers take all steps possible to ensure participant anonymity. The only identifier this team will have access to is your MTurk worker ID. MTurk worker IDs will only be collected for the purposes of distributing compensation and will not be associated with survey responses. MTurk worker IDs will not be shared with anyone outside of the principle investigator, and will be deleted following payment. Data collected from you will be coded with a random number. There will be no costs for participating. Only the principal investigator Casey Crosbie will have access to the data during data collection. Any information provided will remain confidential and kept in a password protected computer file in the researcher's office for a minimum of five years, after which time it will be destroyed.

When the results of the research are published or discussed in conferences, no information will be included that would reveal your identity. Information from this study will only reported as aggregate data, never as particular individuals.

## **Participation or Withdrawal**

Your participation in this study is voluntary. You may decline to answer any question and you have the right to withdraw from participation at any time. Withdrawal will not affect your relationship with Claremont School of Theology in any way. If you do not want to participate, you may simply stop participating.

## **Contacts**

If you have any questions about the study contact the primary investigator **Casey Crosbie** at **909-477-1212** or send an email to **casey.crosbie@cst.edu**. This study has been reviewed by Claremont School of Theology Institutional Review Board and was granted an exemption.

## **Questions about your rights as a research participant.**

If you would like a copy of the completed dissertation, please contact Casey Crosbie at 909-477-1212 or email [casey.crosbie@cst.edu](mailto:casey.crosbie@cst.edu).



By entering this survey, you are indicating that you have read the consent form, you are age 18 or older and that you voluntarily agree to participate in this research study. Amazon has access to your MTurk ID and personal information (social security number, IP address, bank account information, etc...). Please make sure that you have read and agree to Amazon's Mechanical Turk participant and privacy agreements as these may impact the disclosure and use of your personal information.

If you have questions about your rights or are dissatisfied at any time with any part of this study, you can contact, anonymously if you wish, the chair of the Institutional Review Board by phone at (909) 447-6344 or email at [irb@cst.edu](mailto:irb@cst.edu).

Please print this page for your records.

Thank you.

E-Signature

☐

I agree, and wish to enter the survey.

☐

I do not agree. Please take me back to the main MTurk homepage.



## **Appendix E: Survey #2 (2018) Questionnaire**

### **Appreciative Inquiry – Short Answer Questions**

- 1) Describe a time when you were part of a diverse team which really benefited from its diversity. How did you learn about each other's unique gifts and differences? What was special about what this group achieved?
- 2) Tell me about a time you had a wonderful working relationship with someone of a different political stripe from yourself. What was the high point of this relationship? What did you learn from this relationship?
- 3) Tell me about a time when you had a "moment of breakthrough" and came to understand or respect someone you initially had been critical towards. What triggered those feelings?
- 4) Suppose we were to incorporate the best element(s) from the stories you described above into our broader political atmosphere. What would we do the same, do more of, or do differently if everyone were to live by that wisdom?
- 5) What do you value most about yourself that contributes positively in social situations where there may be conflict or disagreement?
- 6) In the responses above, do your answers draw upon any spiritual or religious values? If they do, can you describe them?
- 7) Imagine that it is 20 years in the future. To your surprise, the nation has reached a new level of peace between its different conflicting factions. What is different? What is happening that lets you know it is different?
- 8) If you had three wishes to make such a future come true, what are they?
- 9) Do you have any particular feelings or additional thoughts you'd like to share? (optional).



## Demographic Information

- 10) What is your level of Education?
- a. 1<sup>st</sup> – 8<sup>th</sup> Grade
  - b. 9<sup>th</sup> – 11<sup>th</sup> Grade
  - c. High School Graduate
  - d. Technical/Vocational School Graduate
  - e. Some College
  - f. College Graduate
  - g. Advanced Degree Graduate
  - h. Prefer not to answer.
- 11) What is your sex?
- a. Female
  - b. Male
  - c. Other
  - d. Prefer not to answer.
- 12) What is your Age?
- a. 12-17 years old
  - b. 18-24 years old
  - c. 25-34 years old
  - d. 35-44 years old
  - e. 45-54 years old
  - f. 55-64 years old
  - g. 65-74 years old
  - h. 75 years or older
  - i. Prefer not to answer.
- 13) What is your Family's Annual Income?
- a. Less than \$10,000
  - b. \$10,000-\$19,000
  - c. \$20,000-\$29,000
  - d. \$30,000-\$39,000
  - e. \$40,000-\$49,000
  - f. \$50,000-\$74,000
  - g. \$70,000-\$99,000
  - h. \$100,000-\$119,000
  - i. More than \$120,000
  - j. Prefer not to answer.
- 14) How do you identify your race/ethnicity?
- a. White
  - b. Hispanic or Latino
  - c. Black or African American
  - d. Native American or American Indian
  - e. Asian / Pacific Islander
  - f. Middle Eastern/North African\*
  - g. Other



- h. Prefer not to answer.
- 15) What type of area do you live in?
  - a. A Small Town
  - b. Suburb or Small City
  - c. Large City
  - d. Prefer not to answer
- 16) How would you rate yourself on the political spectrum?
  - a. Very Conservative
  - b. Conservative
  - c. Middle of the Road
  - d. Liberal
  - e. Very Liberal
  - f. Prefer not to answer
- 17) With what political party do you identify?
  - a. Republican
  - b. Lean Republican
  - c. Independent
  - d. Lean Democrat
  - e. Democrat
  - f. Prefer not to answer
- 18) Did you vote in the most recent presidential election?
  - a. Yes
  - b. No.
  - c. Prefer not to answer
- 19) How important is religion to your life?
  - a. Not Very Important
  - b. Somewhat Important
  - c. Very Important
  - d. Extremely Important
  - e. Prefer not to answer
- 20) Do you self-identify as:
  - a. Evangelical Christian
  - b. Mainline Protestant Christian
  - c. Catholic
  - d. Mormon
  - e. Jew
  - f. Muslim
  - g. Atheist/Agnostic
  - h. Buddhist
  - i. Hindu
  - j. None
  - k. Prefer not to answer
- 21) Aside from weddings and funerals, how often do you attend religious services?
  - a. Never
  - b. Seldom
  - c. A few times a year



- d. Once or twice a month
  - e. Once a week
  - f. More than once a week
  - g. Prefer not to answer
- 22) How often do you read the holy text of your particular tradition?
- a. Never
  - b. Seldom
  - c. A few times a year
  - d. Once or twice a month
  - e. Once a week
  - f. More than once a week
  - g. Prefer not to answer
- 23) How often do you pray or meditate?
- a. Never
  - b. Seldom
  - c. A few times a year
  - d. Once or twice a month
  - e. Once a week
  - f. More than once a week
  - g. Prefer not to answer



## Appendix F: Survey #2 (2018) Relevant Data Summary

*Q10 - What is your level of Education?*

#	Answer	%	Count
1	1st - 8th Grade	0.00%	0
2	9th - 11th Grade	0.00%	0
3	High School Graduate	8.67%	13
4	Technical/Vocational School Graduate	2.00%	3
5	Some College	22.67%	34
6	College Graduate	49.33%	74
7	Advanced Degree Graduate	17.33%	26
	Total	100%	150

*Q11 - What is your sex?*

#	Answer	%	Count
1	Male	42.57%	63
2	Female	57.43%	85
3	Other	0.00%	0
	Total	100%	148

*Q12 - What is your age?*

#	Answer	%	Count
1	18-24 years old	5.33%	8
2	25-34 years old	50.00%	75
3	35-44 years old	28.67%	43
4	45-54 years old	10.00%	15
5	55-64 years old	4.67%	7
6	65-74 years old	1.33%	2
7	75 years or older	0.00%	0
	Total	100%	150

*Q13 - What is your Family's Annual Income*

#	Answer	%	Count
1	Less than \$10,000	3.33%	5
2	\$10,000 - \$19,999	9.33%	14
3	\$20,000 - \$29,999	14.67%	22
4	\$30,000 - \$39,999	14.00%	21



5	\$40,000 - \$49,999	15.33%	23
6	\$50,000 - \$59,999	14.00%	21
7	\$60,000 - \$69,999	6.00%	9
8	\$70,000 - \$79,999	6.00%	9
9	\$80,000 - \$89,999	2.00%	3
10	\$90,000 - \$99,999	4.00%	6
11	\$100,000 - \$149,999	8.67%	13
12	More than \$150,000	2.67%	4
	Total	100%	150

*Q14 - How do you identify your race/ethnicity?*

#	Answer	%	Count
1	White	50.67%	76
2	Black or African American	18.67%	28
3	American Indian or Alaska Native	4.00%	6
4	Asian	17.33%	26
5	Native Hawaiian or Pacific Islander	0.00%	0
6	Other	3.33%	5
7	Hispanic or Latino/a	6.00%	9
8	Middle Eastern/North African	0.00%	0
	Total	100%	150

*Q15 - What type of area do you live in?*

#	Answer	%	Count
1	A Small Town	16.67%	25
2	Suburb or Small City	54.00%	81
3	Large City	29.33%	44
	Total	100%	150

*Q16 - How do you rate yourself on the political spectrum?*

#	Answer	%	Count
1	Very Conservative	11.33%	17
2	Conservative	20.67%	31
3	Middle of the Road	26.00%	39
4	Liberal	24.67%	37
5	Very Liberal	17.33%	26
	Total	100%	150



*Q17 - With what political party do you identify?*

#	Answer	%	Count
1	Republican	18.67%	28
2	Lean Republican	10.00%	15
3	Independent	28.00%	42
4	Lean Democrat	15.33%	23
5	Democrat	28.00%	42
	Total	100%	150

*Q19- How important is religion in your life?*

#	Answer	%	Count
1	Not at all Important	27.33%	41
2	Slightly important	14.00%	21
3	Moderately important	18.67%	28
4	Very important	23.33%	35
5	Extremely important	16.67%	25
	Total	100%	150

*Q20 - Do you self-identify as:*

#	Answer	%	Count
1	Evangelical Christian	20.00%	30
2	Mainline Protestant Christian	16.67%	25
3	Catholic	20.00%	30
4	Mormon	1.33%	2
5	Jewish	3.33%	5
6	Muslim	2.00%	3
7	Atheist/Agnostic	15.33%	23
8	Buddhist	2.00%	3
9	Hindu	6.00%	9
10	None	13.33%	20
	Total	100%	150

\*Please reach out to the author for a complete list of descriptive statistics or to view my data.